

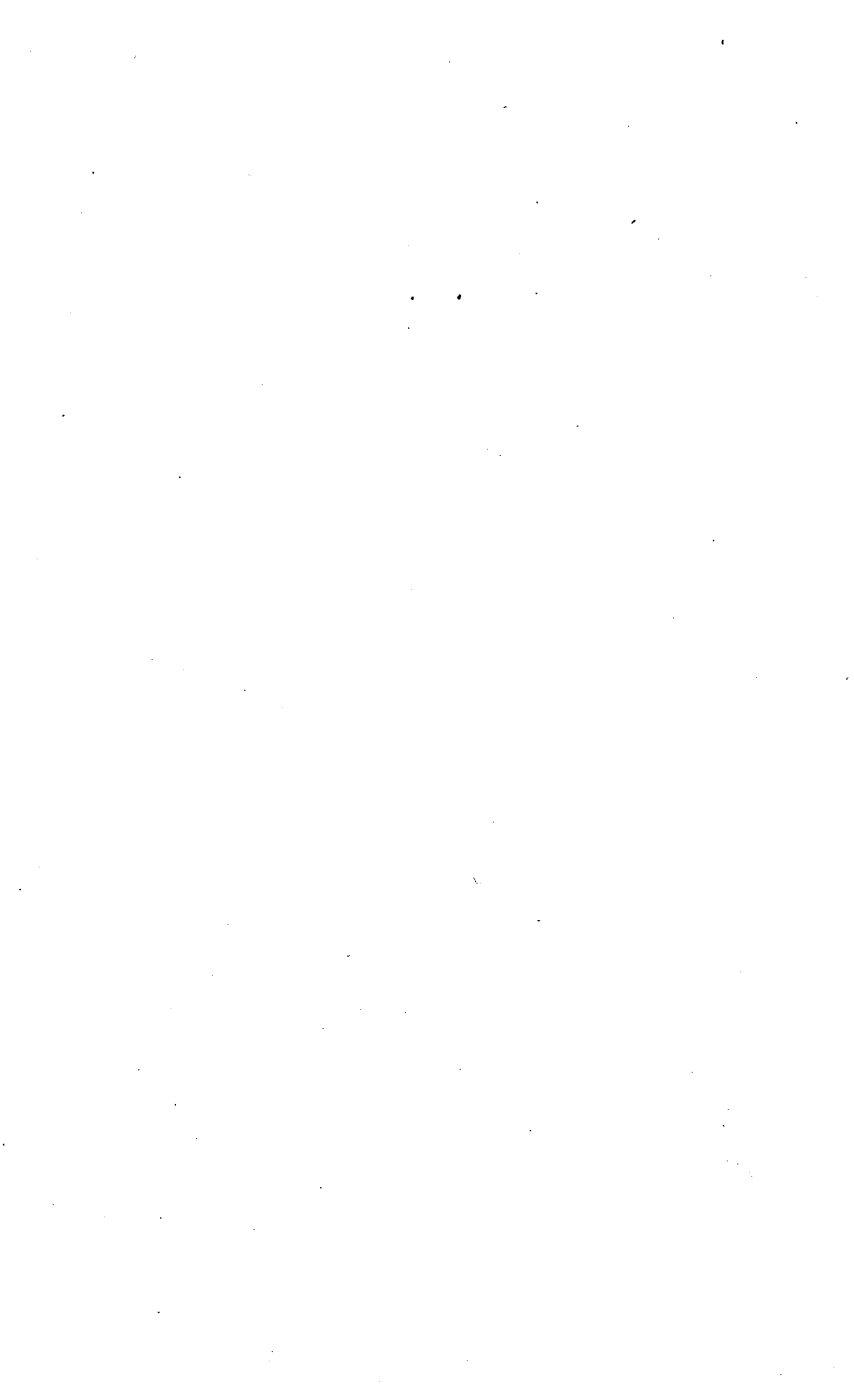
# THE ROMANCE OF AMERICAN METHODISM

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PAUL NEFF GARBER

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**THE ROMANCE OF AMERICAN  
METHODISM**



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PAUL NEFF GARBER, Ph.D.  
Professor of Church History in Duke University

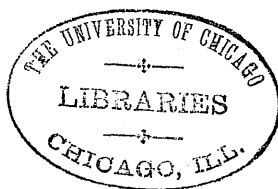


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To  
MY WIFE  
ORINA KIDD GARBER



## P R E F A C E

Bishop Francis Asbury's prophecy that the American Methodists would become "a numerous and wealthy people" has been fulfilled. Asbury's fear that the future Methodists would forget about the struggles, hardships and privations of the pioneer Methodists, also seems to have been justified. There are thousands of Methodists in America who are ignorant of the history of their Church. It is not surprising therefore that many of them are unable to be real Methodists.

The purpose of this book is to present to the followers of Wesley a picture of the heroic era of Methodism. The author hopes that the Methodists who read this volume may be inspired to emulate the achievements of the pioneer Methodists. American Methodism in the day of its strength not only needs to know about the struggles of the early Methodists, but it also needs a baptism of the courage, the devotion, the democracy and the warmth of heart, that characterized Bishop Asbury, the circuit riders, and the laymen of pioneer American Methodism.

The author wishes to acknowledge especial obligation to the Reverend M. T. Plyler, and the Reverend A. W. Plyler, editors of the North Carolina Christian Advocate, for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this volume. Upon their invitation a number of the chapters were published as articles in the North Carolina Christian Advocate. The articles also appeared in the Southern Christian Advocate, the Wesleyan Christian Advocate, the Arkansas Methodist, and the St. Louis Christian Advocate.

PAUL NEFF GARBER

*Durham, North Carolina*  
*January 20, 1931*





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**THE ROMANCE OF AMERICAN  
METHODISM**



# THE ROMANCE OF AMERICAN METHODISM

## CHAPTER I THE BEGINNINGS

### § 1. A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS



TO DAY when Methodism holds such a prominent place in American life it is difficult to conceive of a time when the voice of Methodism was not heard in our country. American Methodist ministers are now numbered by the thousands yet at one time a single Methodist lay preacher constituted the active ministerial roll. That lone lay preacher was Robert Strawbridge. It was he who began the romance of American Methodism. To him belongs the honor of priority for it was Strawbridge who preached the first Methodist sermon, formed the first Methodist society, and built the first Methodist church in the New World. Without ecclesiastical appointment and without salary, he became the pioneer Methodist minister in the American wilderness.

American Methodists will always regret the lack of information concerning the life of Strawbridge, but his work like that of most of the pioneer preachers, was that of making history, not of recording it. The exact date of his birth has never been ascertained but it is known that Strawbridge was born in county Leitrim, Ireland, and that he was converted by the preaching of John Wesley. After his conversion, Strawbridge joined the persecuted

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Methodists and became one of Wesley's local preachers. So zealous was Strawbridge in the advocacy of Methodism that a storm of persecution drove him from his native county, Leitrim. This did not daunt Strawbridge. "He sounded the alarm through many sections" of Ireland and was recognized as a devout, religious leader.

About 1761, because of adverse financial conditions, Strawbridge migrated to America. There he settled near Sam's Creek in Frederick county, Maryland. This county was then the western frontier of the colony of Maryland. In fact it had only recently been won from the Indians. As late as 1755 an Indian Massacre had actually occurred in this section. By settling there it would seem that Strawbridge was burying his talents in a wilderness.

But Robert Strawbridge was a true spiritual son of John Wesley. It took more than a long ocean voyage and the American frontier to destroy his enthusiasm. Immediately after his arrival in Maryland, Strawbridge began to preach in his own home and in those of his scattered neighbors. Soon he had organized a small Methodist society of about fifteen persons. The need of a house of worship caused Strawbridge to build a small log church about a mile from his home. "The Log Meeting-House" as it was called, was a crude structure twenty-two feet square. Light and air was afforded by holes sawed in the logs. The congregation entered and left the church through a large space cut like a doorway at the front of the house. The ground served as a floor. Although devoid of architectural beauty, this building was the first stone of the mighty structure of American Methodism. It was the first of the many thousands of Methodist temples to be erected on American soil.

Sam's Creek neighborhood soon was too small for Strawbridge. He started an itinerary which extended not only to the colony of Maryland but also to the colonies of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. His preaching ability and his personality attracted people. Calls came for Strawbridge to make return engagements and to go to new places where his fame as a preacher had preceded him. He not only preached on these tours but he also organized small Methodist societies and aided in building rude log churches.

Strawbridge was a poor man, and his absence from home for weeks at a time made it impossible for him to support his family. Although his good wife worked and saved, the next meal was often uncertain. With simple faith Strawbridge trusted his Saviour for material things and in this trust he was not betrayed. Friends came to his rescue. In order that Strawbridge might continue to give his time to preaching, neighbors agreed to cultivate his land free of charge and to provide for the wants of his family during his absence. After Strawbridge had lived sixteen years at Sam's Creek, Captain Charles Ridgely, a wealthy country gentleman of Baltimore county, Maryland, provided Strawbridge with a home on the Ridgely estate. Captain Ridgely was not a Methodist but he greatly esteemed Strawbridge and his work. Thus during the last years of his life Strawbridge was relieved of his financial burdens and was able to give all of his time to his pioneer ministry.

Strawbridge had already labored about ten years in America before John Wesley sent the first official Methodist preachers. The first two missionaries, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, were warmly received by Straw-

bridge. He made a special trip to Philadelphia to personally greet them and to offer them his services and co-operation. Strawbridge turned over to Wesley's representatives the churches which he had erected in America. In the year 1773 he deeded as many as six churches to trustees to hold for John Wesley and such persons as should be "appointed at the yearly conference of the people called Methodists in England." During two years, 1773 and 1775, Strawbridge received official appointments from the American Methodist Conference.

On one issue, however, Strawbridge came into conflict with Wesley's missionaries. Until 1784 there were no ordained Methodist preachers in America. Lacking ordination these lay preachers dared not administer the sacraments. In fact Wesley had explicitly denied the sacramental privileges to Methodist lay preachers. Strawbridge disagreed with Wesley on this point. He did not believe that ordination by a bishop was necessary for the administration of the sacraments. He could not understand why a pious minister should be denied the sacramental rights simply because he had never been ordained. Strawbridge began to put his views into practice. Although unordained he started to baptize and to perform the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

When the first Methodist Conference in America was held in 1773, the subject of sacraments was one of the outstanding topics of discussion. In accordance with Wesley's views the conference declared that no Methodist preacher should be allowed to administer the ordinances. Strawbridge, however, was made an exception to this rule. The conference allowed him to administer the sacraments under the direction of Thomas Rankin, Wesley's general



assistant in America. This action indicates, as Stevens has remarked the extraordinary consideration in which Strawbridge was held and the influence he had obtained over the societies in Maryland and Virginia.

The fruits of Strawbridge's labors were amazing. He attracted men who became the early leaders of American Methodism. The Sam's Creek society alone gave four or five preachers to the Methodist itinerancy. Both Richard Owings, the first native local preacher, and William Waters, the first native itinerant, were inspired by the preaching of Strawbridge. Another convert, Thomas Bond, gave two great sons to American Methodism: John Wesley Bond, the traveling companion of Bishop Asbury, and Thomas E. Bond, the great Methodist editor and apologist. Martin Boehm, a leader of early German Methodism in America, was won to Methodism by Strawbridge.

Not only did Strawbridge inspire men to enter the Methodist ministry but he also was instrumental in winning hundreds and perhaps thousands to the faith. In 1773, when the first Methodist Conference was held, it was found that there were 1160 Methodists in America. They were located as follows:

New York	180
Philadelphia	180
New Jersey	200
Maryland	500
Virginia	100

These figures show that in Maryland, where Strawbridge had worked the hardest, there were to be found five hundred or nearly one-half of all the Methodists in America. In 1784, shortly after Strawbridge's death, four-fifths of

the Methodists in America were in Maryland and in states south of Maryland.

When Wesley's missionaries arrived in America they were surprised to find Methodism firmly established in Maryland. Francis Asbury, later Bishop Asbury, made his first visit to Maryland in November, 1772. He found the people there acquainted with Methodism. In his journal Asbury has left the following description of the results of Strawbridge's work in Maryland: "The Lord hath done great things for these people—Men who neither feared God, nor regarded man—swearers, liars, cock fighters, card-players, horse-racers, drunkards, &c., are now so changed as to become new men; and they are filled with the praises of God." What a tribute to the labors of Strawbridge!

The influence of Strawbridge spread to the West. People migrating to the frontier carried the truths which they had received from Strawbridge. As late as 1813 James B. Finley found an old German in Ohio who in answer to the question, "Do you belong to any church?" replied: "O yes, I bese a Metodist."

"Where did you join the Methodists?" inquired Finley.

"I jine the Metodists in Maryland," answered the German, "under dat great man of Got, Strawbridge, on Pipe Creek, and my vife too, and Got has been my fader and my friend ever since, and I bless Got, and I will soon get home to see Him in de Himmels."

Strawbridge continued his evangelistic labors until his death in the year 1781. While on one of his itinerant journeys he was taken ill and died at the home of Joseph Wheeler in Maryland. Strawbridge is now buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Baltimore, side by side with that other great Methodist pioneer, Bishop Francis Asbury.

Yes, there is romance in the work of Robert Strawbridge. It required faith and courage for a man, all alone, to raise aloft in the wilderness of colonial America the banner of Methodism. Hardships and poverty did not destroy Strawbridge's zeal. The man who holds the great honor of being the first of the thousands of American Methodist preachers needed no marching order from a bishop or from a conference; nor did he require a promise of a salary by a congregation.

Robert Strawbridge possessed the spirit of John Wesley. Whether in Ireland or in America, under favorable or unfavorable conditions, Strawbridge felt that it was his duty to proclaim the gospel by word and deed. This pioneer preacher who wrote the first page in the romance of American Methodism could say with John Wesley: "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."

## § 2. OTHER VOICES

The background for another phase of the romance of American Methodism is found in Germany. During the latter part of the seventeenth century that section of Germany called the Palatinate was inhabited by Germans of the Lutheran faith. Unfortunately the Palatinate bordered upon the domains of that bigoted French king, Louis XIV, who both for political and religious reasons desired to conquer that territory. Thus in 1688 in order to annex the Palatinate and to destroy the Lutheran heretics, the armies of Louis

XIV began, in barbarous manner, to lay waste to the Palatinate. Cities were pillaged and burned; defenseless inhabitants were driven from their homes; while many perished from exposure.

The heart of Protestant England went out in sympathy to these persecuted Germans. Economic assistance was given to them and it is estimated that about six thousand found refuge in England. Nearly half of that number later migrated to America and settled in the colonies of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New York; some remained in England, while about one hundred families went to county Limerick, Ireland, where land was leased to them by the English government. Curiously it was from this last group that there was to come a great American Methodist leader.

The Palatines in Ireland were far away from their native land and lacked their customary pastoral oversight. Consequently they began to lose their former religious zeal. In fact, they lapsed so in faith that John Wesley at one time described them as not only devoid of religion but also as becoming eminent for drunkenness, cursing and swearing.

It happened that in April, 1749, some of the Palatines heard a Methodist minister, Thomas Williams, preaching in the streets of Limerick. They were attracted by his fervor and enthusiasm. One of the older men in the group exclaimed: "This is like the preaching we used to hear in Germany." The result was that the Palatines not only returned to hear the preaching of Williams but also invited Williams and other Methodist preachers to hold religious services in their settlements. John Wesley began to include the German towns in his Irish tours. The gospel

as proclaimed by Wesley and his helpers worked a miracle with those people. In 1760 Wesley was able to write thus of the German communities: "I suppose three such towns are scarce to be found again in England or Ireland. There is no cursing or swearing, no Sabbath-breaking, no drunkenness, no ale-house in any of them."

It was Philip Embury, a descendant of these original German refugees who became the second American Methodist pioneer, and the only possible rival with Strawbridge for the honor of priority in American Methodism. Embury was born in the town of Ballingarane, county Limerick, in the year 1728. Because of contacts with Wesley and the early Methodist preachers, Embury was converted on Christmas day, 1752. Serving first as a class-leader and later as a local preacher, Embury became the recognized head of the German-Irish Methodists. But like Robert Strawbridge, in order to better his financial status, Embury was forced to migrate to America. In company with other German-Irish families he arrived in New York City on August 10, 1760.

In New York those German-Irish Methodists suffered a spiritual relapse; almost at once losing their religious ardor. Even Embury buried his talents and for six years did not exercise his office of local preacher. It is true that Embury did not become immoral or irreligious; but his were the sins of omission. Others of the group, however, did not stop with inactivity. One historian insists that they "not only waxed cold" but that they began to indulge in sinful amusements. Embury and his associates thus became the original backsliders of American Methodism.

There was one of those German-Irish Methodists who remained loyal to her religion. That was Mrs. Barbara Heck, a cousin of Embury. It grieved Mrs. Heck to see the increasing sinfulness of her associates. It became increasingly difficult for her to contain her temper and patience in the face of the conduct of her neighbors. It happened that one evening in the autumn of 1766 when Mrs. Heck went to visit in the home of one of her countrymen she found a large company (some of whom were supposed to be Methodists) engaged in playing cards. In holy wrath Mrs. Heck seized the cards and hurled them into the fire. After first reprimanding the people for their sins, she rushed to the home of Embury, and exclaimed to him:

"Brother Embury, you must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands."

"How can I preach, for I have neither a house nor a congregation," was Embury's feeble answer.

"Preach in your own house and to your own company," replied Mrs. Heck. She silenced further objections by promising to furnish Embury with an audience if he would preach. This Embury reluctantly agreed to do.

True to her promise Mrs. Heck secured a small congregation for Embury. In his own home Embury preached his first sermon in America to Paul and Barbara Heck, John Lawrence, Mrs. Embury and "Betty," an African servant. Those five persons, four whites and one colored constituted the first Methodist congregation in New York. After the sermon Embury enrolled his listeners into a Methodist class. A second Methodist banner was thereby unfurled in America.

Embury for a time was the only preacher for the small band of Methodists in New York, but soon another man came to his aid. One day when the Methodists were holding their religious services a British officer entered the room. At first the humble worshippers feared that an officer had come to arrest them for holding an unlicensed religious meeting. Their fears, however, were overcome when the soldier knelt with them at prayer, and joined with them in the singing of Methodist hymns. After the benediction the officer came forward and introduced himself as "Captain Thomas Webb, of the king's service, and also a soldier of the cross, and a spiritual son of John Wesley." He offered his services to the Methodists and thus another great leader was added to American Methodism.

Captain Webb had a distinguished record as a British soldier. He had fought bravely for his king in the several wars against the French in America. He was present with George Washington at General Braddock's defeat. Webb was with General Wolfe at the battle of Quebec. In that engagement he was severely wounded.

At the close of the French and Indian War, Captain Webb had returned to England where he came under the influence of John Wesley. He became a local preacher. His preaching was characterized by its martial spirit. Upon hearing Captain Webb preach in London, Wesley declared that he was "all life and fire." In 1766 military reasons caused Webb to return to America where he was stationed at Albany. While in Albany he learned that there was a small Methodist group in New York and he hastened to join them.

Captain Webb, alternating with Embury, preached to the Methodists of New York. The novelty of his preaching attracted listeners in large numbers. People came to see and hear a man who was dressed in a British military uniform and who, during the sermon, placed his sword on the pulpit. Many of those who came from curiosity left the meetings stirred by Webb's vital message. In 1774 John Adams, later president of the United States, upon hearing Webb preach, said of him: "He is one of the most fluent, eloquent men I ever heard."

The hundreds of people who were attracted to Methodism by the preaching of Embury and Webb caused the Methodists to seek larger places for their religious meetings. Embury's home, the original meeting place, had early become too small as had also a room near Embury's house. In 1767 a "Rigging Loft," sixty by eighteen feet, was secured for the Methodists but this soon proved to be inadequate for the growing Methodist society. The Methodists recognized that a church building was necessary. The members of the society, however, with the exception of Captain Webb, were poor. It seemed to be impossible to erect a church. Again it was Mrs. Barbara Heck who inspired action. In glowing terms she described a vision which came to her regarding a church building. In her vision she had heard these words: "I, the Lord, will do it." Her confidence enthused the other members and after two days of prayer a plan was devised for the erection of a Methodist church.

A subscription paper was prepared in which the Methodists begged the "assistance of Christian friends in order to enable them to build a small house." Captain Webb headed the list of contributors with a subscription of \$150.



Gifts came from people of different social ranks. The mayor of New York City made a contribution while at the same time two negro servants, "Rachel" and "Margaret," gave their mite. Two hundred and fifty-seven persons subscribed to the building of a Methodist church in New York City.

Even with the money promised the building of the church was not an easy task. Enemies arose to hinder the work. Suddenly "the fire of opposition raged tremendously against the rising edifice. Its enemies loudly predicted its own downfall. Pamphlets were published and discourses delivered in order to frustrate its completion." On account of a law of colonial New York against the erection of dissenting churches it was necessary to build the church in the form of a dwelling house, fitting it with a fireplace and chimney.

On October 30, 1768, despite opposition and delays, the Wesley Chapel was dedicated by Embury. What remarkable progress Methodism had made in New York! Embury who two years before had grudgingly preached to five persons now dedicated a church that could contain hundreds of people. Methodism now had a firm footing in New York. It had entered the city to stay.

The contributions of Philip Embury, Captain Webb, and Mrs. Heck did not cease with their labors in New York. Before Webb returned to England he had helped to introduce Methodism on Long Island, and in the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. In England he aided American Methodism by urging Wesley to send preachers to the New World. In 1770 Embury moved to Washington county, New York, where within the bounds of the present Troy Conference he was the

pioneer of Methodism. Mrs. Heck later settled in Canada where she became instrumental in the founding of Methodism in that part of the New World. In this manner Philip Embury, a carpenter, Captain Webb, a soldier, and Mrs. Heck, a devout woman, played their part in the romance of American Methodism.

When Louis XIV drove the Lutherans from the Palatinate he little realized that he was indirectly aiding the founding of American Methodism. As Professor Faulkner has so truly expressed it: "—he little thought that those weak and despised Protestants, who with heavy hearts left their smoking homes for the north, would be the instruments of starting a movement that would checkmate his own church over vast spaces of the world." But such is the romance of American Methodism.

### § 3. "NUMBER 50. AMERICA"

Between the years 1760-1768 there had been started in America two pioneer Methodist movements—one in Maryland under the guidance of Robert Strawbridge, the other in New York led by Philip Embury. In both places the work had been accomplished by "irregulars" (local preachers without any official orders from John Wesley). Both movements at the outset had been financed solely by Americans. By 1768, however, the American Methodists began to turn to Wesley for assistance. Wesley had been asking to contribute to the building fund of the Wesley Chapel. Also as the New York society grew larger, a greater need was felt for a closer relationship with English Methodism. Especially did the New York Meth-

odists desire the services of one of Wesley's itinerant preachers. The story of their appeal to Wesley and his response furnishes another episode in the romance of American Methodism.

On April 11, 1768, the Methodists of New York sent to Wesley one of the most historic letters of American Methodism. It was signed by "T.T." the initials of Thomas Taylor, a man who was personally acquainted with Wesley. The letter appealed to Wesley for an able and experienced preacher. The members were frank in their description of the person they desired. "In regard to a preacher," the letter read, "if possible, we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian: one whose heart and soul are in the work." The Methodist laymen even in that day recognized the value of a good minister, for Taylor wrote: "We may make many shifts to evade temporal inconveniences; but we cannot purchase such a preacher, as I have described." "For the good of thousands," Wesley was urged to send a Methodist minister to America. So much did the Methodists of New York desire a good preacher that they promised to sell their coats and shirts in order to pay his expenses to America. Wesley was begged not to "forget the church in this wilderness." To show the optimism of those early American Methodists they declared that if Wesley would send them a good preacher they doubted not "by the goodness of God such a flame will be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea."

This eloquent letter touched Wesley and at the English Methodist Conference of 1769 he presented the request of the Methodists of New York. The reply of the

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conference can best be seen in the following excerpt from the minutes of that meeting:

“Question 13—We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York (who have built a preaching-house) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? Answer—Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor.

Question 14—What can we do further in token of our brotherly love? Answer—Let us now make a collection among ourselves. (This was immediately done; and out of it £50 were allotted toward the payment of their debt and about £20 given to our brethren for their passage.)”

This noble action proved the interest of Wesley and the English Methodists in the Methodism of the American wilderness. Their generosity should always be remembered by American Methodists. Their spirit seems more remarkable when it is remembered that the salaries of those preachers at that conference were mere pittance. Those men willingly gave \$350 for the cause of American Methodism when their own conference was between twenty and thirty thousand dollars in debt. Their sacrifice is further illustrated by this minute from the same conference journal:

“Question 12—What is reserved for contingent expenses?” The answer was “Nothing.” How many American Methodist conferences today with a proportionate debt would be willing to show a similar spirit of generosity toward a pioneer Methodist movement?

The actions of the English conference brought American Methodism into contact with world-wide Methodism. It was thereby destined no longer to be a small sporadic movement in Maryland and New York. America was now

made a regular Methodist appointment. It was listed in the journal of 1770 as "Number 50. America." How humorous and yet how heroic! Imagine America as included in one Methodist circuit! Certainly Wesley and his preachers were not the kind to quail before stupendous tasks.

Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor were able representatives of English Methodism. They were men whose hearts had been "strangely warmed." They welcomed the opportunity of being Methodist missionaries to America. Pilmoor declared: "My heart was drawn out in such longing desires for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, that I was made perfectly willing to forsake my kindred and native land, with all that was most near and dear to me on earth, that I might spread abroad the honors of His glorious Name."

After a long and tiresome voyage of nine weeks, Boardman and Pilmoor arrived on October 21, 1769, at Gloucester Point, New Jersey. They walked six miles to Philadelphia, where they were gladly welcomed by Captain Webb and the Methodists of Philadelphia. There the missionaries separated: Boardman going to New York; Pilmoor remaining in Philadelphia. They agreed to exchange appointments every four months.

True to their promise, the Methodists of New York endeavored to take care of their first regular preacher. On November 1, 1769, (as soon as Boardman arrived in New York) an agreement was made between him and the members of Wesley Chapel or "John Street Church," as it was more commonly called. The document read thus: "First. That each preacher having labored three months in New York, shall receive three guineas, to provide them-

selves with wearing apparel. Secondly. That there shall be preaching on Sunday morning and Sunday evening; also on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; and the preacher to meet the society every Wednesday evening." It is evident that the minister was expected to give full time to the work of the church.

Although the salary for the preacher was very small, the church cared for their pastors in many other ways. Knowing that the ministers needed books and homiletical aids, there was purchased in January and February, 1770, Cruden's Concordance and Prideaux's Connection "for the use of the preachers." The church bore the tonsorial expenses of the preachers, for on July 17, 1770, £2 5s 6d was paid for shaving the preachers. The following item from the financial records shows that the church paid the medical bill of their ministers: "1771, May 16. To cash for castor oil for Mr. Pilmoor. £0 3s."

American Methodism made progress under the leadership of Boardman and Pilmoor. By April 24, 1770, Pilmoor who was then in New York could report to Wesley: "Our church contains about 1700 people. About a third part of those who attend get in; the rest are glad to hear without. There appears such a willingness in the Americans to hear the word as I never saw before." The Methodists of Philadelphia were soon compelled to secure a meeting house, the historic St. George's Church. Boardman and Pilmoor extended their work beyond New York and Philadelphia. In 1772 Boardman made a tour through New England, stopping at Boston and Providence. Pilmoor aided Methodism in the Southern Colonies. He organized the first Methodist society in Virginia (at Ports-

mouth on November 14, 1772). On September 28, 1772, at Currituck Courthouse Pilmoor had the honor of preaching the first "Methodistical sermon" in North Carolina.

Wesley continued to send missionaries to America. At the English conference of 1771 when Wesley asked his preachers this question: "Our brethren in America cry aloud for help—who is willing to go over and help them?" the answer was: "Francis Asbury and Richard Wright." Other men like Robert Williams and John King, too impatient to await orders from Wesley, came to America as pioneer missionaries. As the number of members and preachers increased, Wesley in 1772 found it necessary to send Thomas Rankin to act as his general assistant in the supervision of American Methodism.

The first American Methodist Conference was held in Philadelphia in 1773. At that meeting there was reported ten regular Methodist preachers who were giving all their time to the work. The statistics also showed that there were 1160 members in the Methodist societies. The conference accepted the authority of Wesley and pledged the American Methodists to uphold the doctrines of the English Methodists as their sole rule of conduct. A militant spirit dominated this first conference of Methodist ministers in America. Thomas Rankin says: "We parted in love, and also with a full resolution to spread genuine Methodism in public and private with all our might." The following year, 1774, the preachers could report 2073 members (a gain of 913). In 1775 there were 3148 members (an increase of 1075). It seemed in truth that a flame had been kindled which was destined not to stop until it reached the "great South Sea."

The American Methodists begged Wesley to make a

visit to America, and if possible, to assume personal supervision of the Methodists in this country. Many letters to this end were sent to him. An excerpt from the letter of Jonathan Bryan to Wesley in 1772 is typical: "If, therefore, you are not too advanced in years, I say to you, in the name of God, come over and help us; in doing which you will oblige many thousands." Wesley desired to make a visit to America. Although the English Methodists objected to his making such a dangerous voyage at his age, Wesley from year to year made tentative plans for a trip to America. In 1773 he was unable to go to America because of the "building of a new chapel." From 1775-1783 the American Revolution prevented any visit and at the close of the war Wesley had passed his eightieth year. In 1784 he was, therefore, compelled to decline the American invitation, saying: "Nay, I shall pay no more visits to the New World, till I go to the world of spirits."

Wesley never lost his love for the Methodists of the American wilderness. Until his death in 1791 he aided them by sending preachers, teachers, and money. He longed to see a world union of Methodists. In his last letter to America, written on February 1, 1791, a month before his death, Wesley begged the American Methodists to declare "to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world, and that it is their full determination so to continue

Though mountains and oceans roll,  
To sever us in vain."

"Number 50. America." Of course American Methodism made progress when the leaders refused to recog-



nize boundaries; when they had the audacity to put the entire western hemisphere in a Methodist circuit. The early Methodists attempted great things for God. American Methodism began with small visible resources but it had a large vision and a great faith. When our Methodist forefathers in New York doubted not "by the goodness of God such a flame will be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea" they were writing another flaming chapter in the romance of American Methodism.

#### § 4. A MARTIAL TEST

By the year 1775 Methodism had secured a foothold in the New World. The movements begun by Strawbridge and Embury and continued by Wesley's missionaries had so grown until by 1775 the term "Methodists" was a familiar one in most of the colonies. In 1775 there were already 3,148 members in the Methodist societies in America. The preachers who had been sent by Wesley were being aided by an ever increasing number of native local preachers. Revivals of religion led by Methodists were being witnessed in various places. The future of American Methodism seemed very bright.

At this time, however, when the Wesleyan prospects were most encouraging, the American Revolution began. The differences between the mother country and the colonies which had been apparent from the very founding of the colonies had to be settled finally by the contest of arms. Between 1775-1783 the Americans fought and won their independence from Great Britain. For eight years all phases of American life were disarranged. As the pro-

gress of religion has always been affected by war, American Methodism during the American Revolution was forced to face its first martial test.

John Wesley with fear and anxiety had watched the slowly rising clouds of war. He knew from experience that wars had always hurt the religious life of the participants. "Whenever war breaks out," said Wesley, "God is forgotten if he is not set at open defiance." He could foresee the horrors of a civil war when the English and Americans would take up arms against each other. He realized the dangers which would beset his preachers in America during such a war. So on March 1, 1775, he wrote the following advice to them: "My Dear Brethren—You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peacemakers: to be loving and tender to all, but to addict yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side." On May 19, 1775, Wesley again wrote urging the Methodist preachers in America to "oppose a party spirit."

It was difficult, however, for the preachers to abide by Wesley's advice. It must be remembered that all the Methodist missionaries in America were native-born Englishmen; that they were bound by ties of birth and patriotism to be loyal to their king. Also they had only been in America a few years and had not in that short time learned to appreciate the American viewpoint. Their entire background stimulated loyalty to their native country. Therefore when the war actually began their sympathies were not with the American cause.

With but one exception all of the English missionaries remained loyal to the king during the Revolution. They

were unable to play the part of a neutral as advised by Wesley. Thomas Rankin, the general assistant, was so outspoken that he ruined his influence with the American people. From the pulpit he declared that it was his belief that the work of God would not revive in America until the American people "submitted to their rightful sovereign, George the Third." Captain Webb was naturally intemperate in his utterances. Martin Rodda was forced to leave America because he was instrumental in spreading British propaganda on his circuit in Delaware. The preachers with their royalist tendencies soon found that they were out of place in America. One by one they returned to England. By 1778 only one English preacher, Francis Asbury, remained in America.

Even John Wesley changed his attitude toward the Americans. At the outset of the Revolution he had endeavored to persuade the English statesmen not to engage in war with the colonies. Upon receiving the news of the battle of Lexington, Wesley wrote to Lord North declaring that the colonists asked for nothing but their legal rights. "I ask," said Wesley, "Is it common sense to use force toward the Americans?" But as the war progressed Wesley's patriotism biased his opinion. In the fall of 1775 he issued a pamphlet entitled, "A Calm Address to Our American Colonies," in which he called upon the Americans to remain loyal to the mother country. The popularity of this pamphlet is shown by the fact that forty thousand copies were distributed within twenty days after publication. In 1776 Wesley wrote another pamphlet, "Some Observations on Liberty," in which he violently attacked the colonists and the colonial arguments in favor of the Revolution.

The actions of the English preachers and the publications of Wesley hurt the Methodist movement in America. For a time the stamp of "Toryism" was placed upon all American Methodists. It was believed by many that Methodism was a Tory agency. Wesley's writings so harmed the standing of American Methodism that Francis Asbury wrote in his journal that he was 'truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America.' James M. Buckley declares: "The venerated Wesley dabbled in political affairs in the old country and his followers were looked at askance on that account in this country."

American Methodists therefore suffered persecution during the Revolutionary War. As the cry "Tory" was hurled at the Methodists it furnished an excuse to mistreat them. American Methodist preachers and laymen were forced to suffer because of the actions of their English brethren. Preachers were seized, imprisoned, and abused. Caleb Pedicord was whipped and so badly hurt that he carried the scars to his grave. Freeborn Garrettson was beaten to insensibility. Some preachers were tarred and feathered. Oaths of allegiance were required of the preachers. Some were forced to seek refuge in neighboring states. Asbury states that at one time during the Revolution so many ministers were in prison or under bond that the societies could not be supplied with pastors.

During these perilous times there was one English preacher who remained true to the American cause. When all the other ministers returned to England he refused to follow their example. That man was Francis Asbury. When his fellow workers left America he declared: "I

can by no means agree to leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ, as we have in America. It would be an eternal dishonor to the Methodists, that we should all leave three thousand souls, who desire to commit themselves to our care; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger." Although his sympathies were with the colonists, yet Asbury endeavored to follow a policy of neutrality. He felt that his great work was to promote the kingdom of heaven. He was willing to leave political matters to others. Although deserted by his fellow English preachers Asbury planned to continue his work in America.

Asbury, however, was not allowed to remain unmolested. The state of Maryland had enacted a law requiring all to take the oath of allegiance with a pledge to take up arms in aid of the Revolution. As Asbury was working in Maryland he was faced with this oath. Although he was loyal to his adopted country, yet Asbury as a minister could not conscientiously approve of the oath of allegiance. He therefore in March, 1778, left Maryland and found refuge in Delaware at the home of Judge Thomas White. Even in Delaware Asbury was from time to time persecuted and forced to hide for safety in swamps and forests.

Gradually public sentiment changed toward Asbury. In 1779 a letter written by Asbury in 1777 came into the hands of American officers and was made public. In this letter Asbury had declared to a friend his intention of remaining in America and had expressed the belief that the American people would never be satisfied with less than their independence. He further added that he had a presentiment that they would get it. Thus Asbury had

been persecuted for alleged disloyalty when in reality his sympathies had been with the American cause. The publication of this letter gave Asbury the freedom of traveling through the colonies and for the remainder of the period of the war he was able to give his time to religious work.

Although some of the native preachers, notably Jesse Lee, because of pacifist views, refused to bear arms, the majority of American Methodists, laymen and preachers, gave their full loyalty to America. Many of them were able later in life to boast that they had fought for the cause of American liberty. Green Hill, a Methodist preacher of North Carolina, represented during the years 1774-1779 his county in the revolutionary legislative assemblies of his state. He also served as a soldier and chaplain in the North Carolina militia. Philip Bruce, another Methodist leader in North Carolina, was present at the battle of King's Mountain. On another occasion this minister when invited to preach to a band of Tory soldiers, so presented the American cause that they dispersed. It can be said that the native ministers "were true hearted Americans, and while the moral views and conscientious scruples of some of them and many other Methodists were not on principle favorable to war, they were consistently loyal."

The loyalty of Asbury and the native preachers and laymen should be stressed because it has been popular to place the name of Tory or traitor upon all the Methodists of the revolutionary period. The loyalty of the American preachers and laymen far outweighs the injudicious actions of Wesley and his English preachers. It was natural for the English preachers to be loyal to their king,

but their attitude did not in any way represent the sentiment of the American Methodists.

The American Revolution put many obstacles in the path of Methodism. Newly organized societies were entirely broken up by the war. Preachers were often unable to meet their appointments. Some Methodists fell on the field of battle. Jesse Lee declared that by "the war on one hand, and persecution on the other, the preachers were separated from their flocks, and all conspired to increase the burden of Christians."

But it shall always be to the everlasting honor of the Methodists that numerical gains were made during the years of civil strife. Persons who hated the Methodists could cry "Tory" and start persecutions, but that did not daunt the native Methodist preachers. When the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776 Methodism had only 24 preachers and 4,921 members. Seven years later in 1783 there were 82 preachers and 13,740 members. Martial obstacles were unable to block the progress of American Methodism.

The actions of the American Methodists immediately after the war leave no doubt of their loyalty to America. In the Methodist liturgy of 1784 a prayer was included for "the supreme rulers of the United States." The declaration of loyalty to America in Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church is believed to be the first ecclesiastical recognition of the new republic. A Methodist, Judge Bassett of Delaware, was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 that framed the constitution of the United States. Methodism was also first in paying homage to President George Washington. General Washington was inaugu-

rated president on April 30, 1789. On May 29, 1789, Bishop Coke and Bishop Asbury on behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church appeared before President Washington and read him an address congratulating him upon his election to the high office. They promised the loyalty and support of the Methodist people. Thus the Methodists have the honor of being the first religious body to recognize the nation in its organic law, and the first to pay homage to the first president of the United States.

The American Methodists were tested during the American Revolution. With Wesley hostile to the American cause and with the leading ministers leaving the country, it is remarkable that Methodism was able to exist. Although they were loyal to America, the native preachers and laymen suffered persecution. Even so Methodism expanded. The American Revolution brought to the front a great Methodist leader. American Methodism will always be proud of the attitude of Francis Asbury during the first martial test; will always be grateful that he could declare: "It would be an eternal dishonor to the Methodists, that we should all leave theree thousand souls, who desire to commit themselves to our care; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger."



## CHAPTER II

### THE NEW CHURCH

#### § 1. WESLEY FACES THE FACTS



WHEN John Wesley began to spread scriptural holiness over England he had no intention of starting a new church. His original plan had been to organize small Methodist societies within the Anglican Church. He endeavored therefore in every possible manner to avoid friction between the Methodists and the Anglicans. Reared as Wesley had been in the Anglican Church he held to the traditional belief that no one could administer the sacraments of the church unless ordained by an Anglican bishop. When laymen offered to help Wesley in his great revival he accepted them as lay preachers, but denied to them the right of administering the sacraments.

The pioneer American Methodists continued Wesley's policy. Until the year 1784 all the Methodist preachers in America were unordained. They were only laymen who had been commissioned by Wesley as lay preachers without any ecclesiastical rights. At the first conference of the American ministers in 1773 it was agreed that, "Every preacher, who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America, is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper." The ministers were to instruct the members of the Methodist societies to receive baptism and the Lord's Supper from the hands of the Anglican clergy.

The obvious difficulty arose. The Anglican clergy as a body were not concerned for the welfare of the Methodists. In many places the Methodists were even insulted

and persecuted by the Anglican priests. Only a few Anglican clergymen, like Devereux Jarratt in Virginia, showed any interest in the Methodist movement. The reputation of many of the Anglican priests was such that the Methodists did not care to receive baptism or the elements of the Lord's Supper from their hands. Furthermore, the self-complacent, worldly, Anglican ministers could never have kept pace with the restless, ardent Methodist itinerants.

The American Methodists were unable to turn to any other church for the sacraments. The Baptists refused to baptize infants and denied admittance to the Lord's table of any who had not been immersed. The Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, Calvinistic in theology, would not give the sacraments to any who held the Arminian views of John Wesley. The result was that until 1784 very few of the American Methodists had been baptized and they seldom attended Holy Communion.

It was difficult for the Methodists to make progress when the preachers had to apologize constantly for their inability to administer the sacraments. It was natural therefore that there arose among the Methodist ministers the conviction that such a state of affairs was wrong. Lacking the Anglican beliefs of Wesley they saw only the practical side of the question. They began to argue that the sacraments were the heritage of all Christians. Methodist leaders began to deny the right of the Anglican Church to allow the sacraments to be administered only by those who had been ordained by a bishop. They declared that a holy life was the important qualification for the dispensing of the sacred elements.

Such arguments were followed by action. The Ameri-

can Revolution aided this step, because during the war many of the Anglican ministers returned to England. In many places, therefore, the Methodists even if they had desired to do so could not have turned to the Anglican Church for the sacraments. Doubts arose as to whether Wesley who had so openly proclaimed his love for the Anglican Church would ever grant ordination to the Methodist preachers. Hence, on May 18, 1779, the Methodist preachers in the Southern States met at the Brokenback church in Fluvanna county, Virginia, and there agreed to break Wesley's rule regarding sacraments. Three preachers were set aside by this conference to administer the sacraments to the Methodist societies, and to ordain other Methodist preachers. The reason for this action as stated in the minutes of the meeting was: "Because the Episcopal establishment is now dissolved, and, therefore, in almost all our circuits the members are without the ordinances."

The action of the Southern preachers was severely opposed by Francis Asbury and the Methodist workers in the middle and Northern States. Although Asbury believed with the leaders in the South that the sacraments and a separate church were desirable, he also thought that the initial step should be taken by Wesley. Asbury felt that when Wesley understood the plight of the American Methodists he would devise some plan to give them the rights and privileges of an ecclesiastical body.

For a time it seemed as if the American Methodists would be divided over the question of the sacraments. A rupture was avoided only by a compromise, which suspended the resolution of the Brokenback conference for one year. In the meantime Asbury was to ask Wesley for

action on his part. Appeals were made to Wesley by many preachers and laymen as well as by Asbury. They described their pressing problem and implored Wesley to grant to them a mode of church government suited to their exigencies.

These appeals to Wesley came at an opportune time. The Revolutionary War was closing and Wesley could see that the political ties between the two countries would be forever severed. A changed political relationship also meant a new religious alignment. Wesley realized that the Methodists in America were daily growing in number and strength and that with the coming of political freedom to America it was natural for the Methodists to desire religious independence.

American Methodism will always be grateful that the founder of Methodism was able to see clearly and to act courageously. As much as Wesley loved the Anglican Church, he loved the Methodist societies more. He realized that the time had come to free the American Methodists from the Anglican Church. Wesley had firmly believed that episcopal ordination was necessary for the right to give the sacraments, but when he heard of the critical condition of the American Methodists who so much desired the ordinances, he could no longer hold to an ecclesiastical custom. He saw that a crisis confronted the American Methodists and he was not willing to allow the rules of the Anglican Church to harm them.

It was at this point that Wesley's knowledge of church history proved of value to the American Methodists. He knew that in the early Christian Church bishops and presbyters (elders) were of the same order and had equal right of ordination. Since Wesley was a presbyter in the

Anglican Church he had according to the method of the primitive church the right to ordain both presbyters and bishops. Although Wesley had understood this for many years, his love for the Anglican Church had kept him from violating their custom by ordaining Methodist preachers in England. America however, at the close of the Revolution, was no longer connected with the English government and the Anglican Church. Certainly it could not harm the Anglican Church for Wesley to ordain men for the American field. Bravely Wesley declared: "My scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's rights, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest."

Upon that basis Wesley proceeded to action. He called into his room in February, 1784, Dr. Thomas Coke, an ordained preacher of the Anglican Church who had assisted Wesley in the Methodist work in England and Ireland. Wesley informed Coke of the religious conditions in America and of the dire need of some organization for the American Methodists. He further informed Coke of his belief that presbyters possessed the right of ordination. As Wesley was a presbyter he asked Coke to accept ordination from him and then go to America as the superintendent of the Methodist societies there. Coke was at first startled at such a radical step but after careful study he agreed to coöperate with Wesley's plan.

On September 2, 1784, at Bristol, England, Thomas Coke was set apart by the laying on of hands by Wesley and other ordained ministers to be a superintendent of the American Methodists. At that same momentous meeting Richard Whatecoat and Thomas Vasey were ordained as elders. Wesley said concerning this important move:

"I took a step which I had long weighed, and appointed three of our brethren to go and serve the desolate sheep in America, which I verily believe will be much to the glory of God."

On September 18, 1784, Dr. Coke in company with Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey sailed for America upon an important errand. They were going to America to gather the scattered Methodist societies into an ecclesiastical organization. At last the hopes and prayers of the American Methodists were to be answered. They were now to have superintendents and ordained ministers. No longer were they to be members of Methodist societies within the Anglican Church. They were now to have a separate status. Wesley had faced the facts. He had chosen what seemed to him to be the best method of handling a difficult religious situation.

## § 2. THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE

The arrival of Dr. Thomas Coke in New York on November 3, 1784, marked a new era in the history of American Methodism, for he brought the good news that John Wesley had agreed to the demands of the Methodists in America concerning the ordination of preachers. He carried instructions from Wesley to ordain Francis Asbury as a superintendent and to organize the American Methodist societies into an ecclesiastical body. With such a large task before him the learned doctor was destined to play an important role in the romance of American Methodism.

It is interesting to notice how Wesley's Anglican training influenced his plan of organization for the Ameri-

can Methodists. Accustomed as he was to episcopal government, it was logical for Wesley to appoint superintendents (later called bishops) for the American Methodists. These men were to hold positions in America similar to those held by the Anglican bishops in England. During the lifetime of Wesley the superintendents were to be subject to him, and after his death to the English Methodist Conference.

The fallacy in Wesley's plan was that he gave scarcely any power to the American preachers. Annual conferences of the ministers were to be held but only for the purpose of discussing local matters and of announcing the appointments. There was to be very little voting done by the preachers. Wesley had told Coke: "If you, Brother Asbury and Brother Whatcoat are agreed, it is enough." There was no place in the scheme for the right of the ministers to accept or reject Wesley's proposals or nominations. The important legislative decisions were to be made by Wesley, the English Methodist Conference, and the superintendents. Wesley would have created in America a Methodist organization, modeled after the Anglican system, with episcopal control and with only the minimum of power in the hands of the preachers.

Admirable as Wesley's plan of government may have been, it was entirely out of keeping with American views. It therefore remained for Francis Asbury to inject into Wesley's scheme the democratic element. In 1784 Francis Asbury had already lived thirteen years in America. During the American Revolution when all other English Methodist preachers returned home, Asbury had remained at his work. He therefore understood the American peo-

ple and the American Methodists far better than did Wesley. Asbury realized that any plan of church government must be in harmony with the prevailing spirit of political and religious freedom. He knew that the American Methodists would never permit themselves to be governed in an autocratic fashion either by Wesley or the English Conference. Asbury therefore, although an Englishman by birth and commissioned as a preacher by John Wesley, became the champion of the American Methodists.

On Sunday, November 14, 1784, Dr. Coke met Asbury at Barratt's Chapel, located in the state of Delaware. Without delay Coke explained his mission to Asbury; how he had been instructed by Wesley to ordain him as a superintendent; and how they were then to supervise the American Methodists, subject to Wesley and the English Methodists. To Coke's amazement Asbury refused to obey the wishes of Wesley. He would not accept ordination if based only upon Wesley's appointment. Asbury further objected to the control of the American Methodists by the English Methodists. He contended that the Methodist societies were now able to govern themselves; that political freedom from England also denoted religious independence. He declared that the final decision in such an important matter rested with the preachers. He ended by announcing to Coke: "Doctor, we will call the preachers together, and the voice of the preachers shall be to me the voice of God." Accordingly it was decided that a conference of the ministers should be held at Baltimore during the Christmas week of 1784.

In that day with neither trains nor telegraph system and with only poor roads and a slow questionable mail



service it was a task to notify the eighty-three Methodist preachers scattered on large circuits from New York to the Carolinas. It was necessary to send a special herald to summon the ministers. Freeborn Garrettson volunteered to give the announcement of the proposed conference. Dr. Coke wrote in his journal: "We therefore sent off Freeborn Garrettson like an arrow—" Garrettson did his work so well that sixty of the eighty-three Methodist preachers in America attended the Baltimore Conference. Can you not see the romance of American Methodism depicted in Freeborn Garrettson riding horseback twelve hundred miles in six weeks in order to gather the Methodist leaders of America to a special conference?

At ten o'clock A. M., December 24, 1784 the Christmas Conference was called to order in the Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore. The Baltimore society had the honor of entertaining the greatest of all conferences of American Methodism. This church, however, with such a beautiful name, was in reality only a rude structure. The members of the society however endeavored to show respect for their distinguished visitors. They "were so kind," says Coke, "as to put up a large stove, and to back several of the seats, that we might hold our Conference comfortably."

The organizing conference of American Methodism lacked the publicity which is now given Methodist gatherings. There were no press dispatches to inform the readers of this important meeting. The city of Baltimore gave very little attention to those brave Methodist preachers who on horseback had faced for many miles the cold December winds. A new church destined to

become the largest Protestant denomination in America came into existence without any flaming announcement to the world.

Asbury's viewpoint in preference to that of Wesley was accepted by the Methodist preachers at the Christmas Conference. Instead of placing themselves under the control of the English Methodists the ministers decided to organize a separate church and to choose their own superintendents. On the first day of the conference they elected by a unanimous vote Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to be the superintendents of the new church. A sufficient number of elders were selected by the conference to administer the sacraments for the church. A Book of Discipline was adopted by the Conference. "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America," a book of worship prepared by Wesley, was accepted by the preachers as their guide in the conduct of the religious services.

Since a new church was being organized it was necessary to select a name for it. When the question was asked: "What name or title shall we take?" John Dickins proposed that the conference adopt the title, "Methodist Episcopal Church." It was an ideal name for it included two important points—showing the Methodist background and the episcopal plan of government. The proposed name appealed to the preachers. The motion was carried without any agitation and without a dissenting vote.

The Christmas Conference was noted for its religious enthusiasm. It actually developed into a revival. Religious services were held daily during the ten days of the meeting. Every morning at six o'clock there was a

sermon by one of the preachers. Dr. Coke spoke at noon every day except on Sundays and ordination days when the services began at 10 A. M. Daily at six P. M. there was preaching at three different places in the city in order to accomodate the people who came to the meetings; for otherwise as Coke explained, "we should not have had half room enough for the people who attended in the evening."

A spirit of Christian brotherhood dominated the deliberations of the "Fathers of the Church." It is doubtful if another Methodist conference has ever been held in such a spirit of fraternal love. Dr. Cooke wrote in his journal, "I admire the body of American preachers. The spirit in which they conducted themselves in choosing the elders, was most pleasing. I believe they acted without being at all influenced either by friendship or resentment, or prejudice, both in choosing and rejecting." Thomas Ware, a member of the conference, wrote fifty years later: "I have a thousand times looked back to that memorable era with pleasurable emotions—during the whole time of our being together—there was not, I verily believe, on the conference floor or in private, an unkind word spoken, or an unbrotherly emotion felt. Christian love predominated, and under its influence we 'kindly thought and sweetly spoke the same'."

Although the American Methodists made themselves ecclesiastically independent of England and of Wesley it was not done in an acrimonious spirit. On the contrary, the members of the Christmas Conference definitely showed their respect for the great founder of Methodism. In the Discipline they placed these words: "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves

his sons in the gospel, ready in matters belonging to church government, to obey his commands."

It is not correct to speak of the preachers who attended the Christmas Conference as "Fathers" if that appellation denotes age and experience. They were more like "boys." Bishop Asbury was less than forty years of age when he was consecrated as superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There were a few men of age and experience in the group, but the greater number of the preachers were young men. Of the eighty-three in the itinerancy at that date, only sixteen had served as many as five years in the Methodist ministry; twenty-three were still in the two year probation period; and eighteen had only been received into full connection in 1784. Of the eighty-three preachers eleven were married. Young men organized the Methodist Episcopal Church and to them was entrusted its future.

On January 2, 1785 the conference adjourned and the preachers departed to their fields of labor to announce that a new church had come into existence. This news was gladly received by the Methodists. Ezekiel Cooper declares that the organization of the scattered societies into an independent church met "with general approbation both among the preachers and members. Perhaps we shall seldom find such unanimity of sentiment upon any question of such magnitude." The people who had waited so patiently for the ordained Methodist preachers now came forward to receive the sacraments from their hands.

## § 3. A STUPENDOUS TASK

“To reform the continent, and to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands” was the answer of the Christmas Conference to the question, “What may we reasonably believe to be God’s design in raising up the preachers called Methodists?” The reply signified the launching of Methodism upon a stupendous task for in the year 1784 religion and morals in America were at a very low level. It was at a time when the devout American Christians were despairing of a revival of religion and a reform of morals that the Methodist Episcopal Church was born with the brave and noble purpose of reforming a continent. In order to appreciate the large undertaking which that Church assumed, it is necessary to understand the religious and moral conditions of America during and immediately after the Revolutionary War.

The French and Indian War (1756-1763) had aided the rise of deism and unbelief in America. During that war many of the American militiamen had been in close contact with the British soldiers and they had adopted the moral standards and the rationalistic philosophy of the latter. This tendency was recognized by President Ezra Stiles of Yale College, who wrote: “I imagine the American morals and religion were never in so much danger as from our concern with the Europeans in the present war.”

The alliance with France during the American Revolution increased this irreligious trend. Gratitude to France for military assistance opened an easy entrance for French deism into America. Intercourse with “corrupted foreigners” (as Timothy Dwight called the French

allies) was largely responsible for the wave of French infidelity which swept over the land. American statesmen and military officers were especially influenced by the French philosophy. Americans began to accept the views of the deists, namely, that God may have created the world but that He was now far away and not in contact with mankind. It became popular to attack the divinity of Christ, to sneer at the Bible and to label religion "superstition."

These attacks upon religion came at a time when the American churches were least able to reply. During the Revolution the people were interested primarily in the progress and success of their military forces. It has always been hard to serve both God and Mars. At the beginning of the war the English missionaries returned home, leaving many Americans without pastoral oversight. Many churches were closed during the period of strife because the religious leaders were serving in the Continental army. Many Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches were destroyed by the British soldiers. Because the majority of the Anglican clergy were loyal to the British cause, a large number of the Anglican churches were burned or dismantled by the colonial troops. Thus the American churches, weakened by war, were unable to protect the people from the iconoclastic philosophy of eighteenth century France.

The Revolutionary War brought in its train a wave of immorality. Dorchester says: "The Revolutionary War had not progressed far before the faithful ministers of the Presbyterian Church in their synod deplored the spread of gross immoralities." In 1779 that same church declared that degeneracy of manners, vice, and immor-

ality existed throughout the land. Semple, the Baptist historian, writes that in Virginia, "the love of many waxed cold. Some of the watchmen fell, others slumbered—Iniquity greatly abounded." Beardsley says: "Worship was universally neglected while immorality, intemperance, and vice increased alarmingly on every hand."

The close of the American Revolution did not restore religious normalcy to America. Immorality and irreligion had secured too strong a foothold to be erased at once from American life. In fact it seemed in 1783 that rationalism and deism would completely destroy Christianity in America. Infidel literature flooded the country. Timothy Dwight of Yale College said: "From France, Germany, and Great Britain, the dregs of infidelity were vomited upon us." In 1784 Thomas Paine wrote his "Age of Reason" which was a popularization of the current deistic views. Written as it was in "the language of the street" the "Age of Reason" was read by people formerly unacquainted with the French writings.

Prominent American leaders began to champion the deistic views. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were known as deists and free thinkers. In 1784 General Ethan Allen wrote his "Reason the Only Oracle of Man," which is considered to be the first formal publication in America openly attacking the Christian faith. General Henry Dearborn, secretary of war in the Jefferson cabinet, was so hostile to the churches that he remarked that "so long as these temples stand, we cannot hope for good government." General Charles Lee in his will requested that he should not be buried "in any church or church-yard, or within a mile of any Presbyterian or Anabaptist meeting-house."

The colleges and universities also succumbed to rationalism and its accompanying evils. When Ashbel Green entered Princeton College in 1782, he found among the students only two who professed religion and only about five or six who did not use profane language in ordinary conversation. In 1795 there were but four or five Christians in the student body of Yale College. Lyman Beecher, a student at Yale, said in describing conditions there: "The college church was almost extinct. Most of the students were skeptical and rowdies were plenty. Wines and liquors were kept in many rooms; intemperance, profanity, gambling, and licentiousness were common—Most of the class before me were infidels, and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, etc." Transylvania University passed from the control of the Presbyterians into the hands of infidels. The University of Pennsylvania conferred an honorary degree upon Thomas Paine. Bishop Meade gives this testimony regarding the students in Virginia: "Infidelity was rife in the State, and the College of William and Mary was regarded as the hotbed of French politics and religion. I can truly say that then and for some years after in every educated young man in Virginia whom I met I expected to find a skeptic, if not an avowed unbeliever."

The deism, infidelity, and immorality of the political leaders and students reached the masses. Even in outlying districts unbelief became common. In 1793 the Kentucky legislature decided that prayers were no longer necessary at its sessions. Infidel clubs with high sounding French titles arose with the avowed purpose of destroying religion. New towns in the West were named for French revolutionary heroes. The Pastoral Letter of the Presby-



terian General Assembly of 1798 declared that "profaneness, pride, luxury, unjustness, intemperance, lewdness, and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence abound."

A spirit of pessimism dominated the churches and religious leaders. In many parts of the country revivals were practically unknown. Devereux Jarratt of the Protestant Episcopal Church stated in 1794: "The state of religion is gloomy and distressing; the church of Christ seems to be sunk very low." When John Marshall, the great jurist and a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, was asked to contribute to the founding of a theological seminary for his own denomination, he hesitated because he "doubted the propriety of offering inducements to young men to enter the ministry of a Church which in this country, must certainly fail."

At the very time when the decline of religion and morality was so prominent in the Eastern States, thousands of people were annually crossing the Alleghany mountains and were settling in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. So large was this western movement that between 1800 and 1810 the population of Ohio increased five fold. During the same period the population of Indiana quadrupled. This rapidly growing section of America offered a challenge to the churches of the East.

For a time it seemed that religion was destined to become extinct in the West. The emigrants to the West did not go there because of religious convictions but, as Bishop Asbury once said, "rather to get plenty of good land." To these pioneers the economic question was the important one. Although the frontiersmen were far away from religious influence, yet infidelism and deism seemed to be able to reach them. Between the years 1812-1815

Samuel J. Mills, a New England religious leader made several tours of the West. He reported that the whole country from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico, was as the valley of the Shadow of Death. He found that in certain sections, there were as many as twenty thousand people without a minister of any denomination. In the state of Louisiana Mills found people who had never seen a Bible, nor heard of Jesus Christ. He estimated that seventy-six thousand Western families were without Bibles.

The older churches of America were unable to combat the forces of evil so prominent in America. They were handicapped in the undertaking by their traditions, theology and polity. The Protestant Episcopal Church with its Anglican background and formalism, could never have reformed the continent. The Presbyterians were hampered by their Calvinism and their policy of using only college trained ministers. The Lutherans appealed only to the German element of the population. The Baptists were checked in a great national movement by their congregational government and by their insistence upon immersion as the only mode of baptism.

America should be grateful that Methodism arose to face the deism, atheism and immorality of the young nation. The Methodists were not hampered by tradition, formalism, or theology. They were not daunted by the dark religious aspect of America in 1784. They were not afraid of stupendous tasks. When those sixty Methodist preachers left the Christmas Conference they went forth upon a great crusade. While other denominations appeared helpless before the forces of evil, the youngest and smallest denomination accepted the challenge "to reform the continent and to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands."

## CHAPTER III

### A GREAT LEADER

#### § 1. THE SPIRIT OF ASBURY



HITHER am I going? To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No: I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do."

In this manner Francis Asbury on September 12, 1771 at the age of twenty-six, stated the great purpose of his life. This noble resolution, made on his voyage to America, gave Asbury power to rise to a position of leadership among the small band of Wesleyan missionaries in colonial America. At the Christmas Conference, thirteen years later, the American preachers showed their confidence in Asbury by unanimously electing him a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For the next thirty-two years Bishop Asbury never allowed the Methodists to forget that their primary object in life was to "live to God and to bring others so to do." The "spirit of Asbury" became the "spirit of American Methodism."

The Christmas Conference adjourned on January 2, 1785. Two days later Asbury began "his Episcopal ministrations by riding on horseback fifty miles through frost and snow." On that day he set the pace for the American itinerancy. He soon established himself as the great traveling bishop of Methodism. In 1816 when death finally overtook him, Bishop Asbury was still traveling. It is estimated that he traveled not less than 270,000 miles over the bad roads of early America. As bishop he endeavored to make an annual and sometimes a

semi-annual visit to all parts of his diocese. He visited North Carolina upon sixty-three different occasions. To such frontier states as Tennessee and Georgia he went twenty times. In 1808 while traveling in Ohio, Asbury was met by a stranger who abruptly asked him: "Where are you from?"

Asbury replied: "From Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or almost any place you please."

But why tarry with his wanderings? Francis Asbury was first of all a man of God and a great preacher. To Asbury travel was only a means to an end. During his ministry in America, both as an itinerant and as bishop, Asbury delivered 16,425 sermons, or an average of one a day for forty-five years. So great was the demand for Asbury to preach that he once wrote: "It would seem as if the preachers think they are committing sin if they do not appoint preaching for me every day, and even twice a day." Asbury did not need a church for a religious service. A tavern, a school-house, a log cabin, a barn, or the open air served as a tabernacle for him. His sermons were not pleasant essays but utterances of a prophet. "Lord, keep me—" Asbury once wrote in his journal "from preaching empty stuff to please the ear, instead of changing the heart." This was his daily prayer.

Preaching and traveling, however, were only a part of Asbury's labors. As bishop he personally supervised every phase of the Methodist work in the New World. With the aid only of deep religious convictions Asbury commanded the forces and agencies of Methodism. Besides directing the educational and publication work of the Church, Asbury presided over two hundred and

twenty-four annual conferences and ordained more than four thousand preachers. He possessed the gift of government. The preachers regarded Asbury with reverential awe. When Jacob Young met Asbury, he declared that Asbury "fixed his eye upon me as if he would look me through."

Asbury laid heavy burdens upon his preachers which required great sacrifices but they obeyed him. They knew that "if he appointed his fellow itinerants to hard circuits, his own was the largest and hardest of all. If he condemned all softness and ease severely in others, his own example was in keeping with his words." Buckley states: "No general ever stationed his troops with greater skill than Asbury displayed in the adjustment of ministerial supplies to the infant societies."

In spite of his many episcopal duties Asbury found time to write and to study. Although the correspondence of the Church was large, by writing on the average of three letters a day, he handled it without the aid of a secretary. In order that the future Methodists might know of the struggles and sufferings of the early Methodists, Asbury faithfully kept a journal which today comprises three volumes of five hundred pages each. In the quiet of dawn while others slept, Asbury in six years mastered Hebrew and Greek so that he might read the Bible in the original languages. When sickness prevented his regular tours Asbury would turn to his books and his pen, endeavoring to spend at least ten hours each day in reading the Bible and other books and in writing inspiring letters to his preachers.

It took an unconquerable spirit to face the physical hardships which beset the path of Asbury. Riding through

sparsely settled country he was being soaked constantly with rain. Because of the scarcity of bridges he was often forced to swim rivers and creeks. His journal is filled with notes of this kind: "We rode twenty-five miles through a powerful fall of rain; but we wrought our way through the swamps, floating and sinking as we went." In 1786 Asbury noted: "Preached at Morgan Bryan's. Next day I set off in the rain, and traveled with it: we swam Grant's creek and reached Salisbury in the evening, wet and weary."

Riding in the rain was only one of the many hardships which Asbury encountered. Day after day he was forced to travel from morning to evening without rest and sometimes without food. In January, 1788 Asbury ejaculated: "I seldom mount my horse for a ride of less than twenty miles on ordinary occasions; and frequently have forty or fifty, in moving from one circuit to the other: in traveling thus I suffer much from hunger and cold." Asbury's journal contains many descriptions of the poor accommodations of the homes and taverns. Once he exclaimed: "O how glad should I be of a plain, clean plank to lie on, as preferable to most of the beds; and where the beds are in a bad state, the floors are worse." Sometimes Asbury was forced to sleep in the open with his saddle-bags as a pillow. On the frontier he was in danger constantly of Indian attacks and at times it was necessary for armed bands of friends to escort him to his appointments.

Such hardships never retarded the work of Francis Asbury. Regardless of rain, snow, storms, or danger he pressed forward. He would call to his companions: "Let us journey on, we are neither sugar nor salt; there

is no danger of our melting." He was impatient with the preachers who in any way quailed or delayed before the hardships of nature. Henry Boehm says of Asbury: "He never waited for any man, and he wanted no man to wait for him." His motto was, "The King's business requires haste."

It is difficult to realize but not hard to understand that this spiritual giant was a man of poor health. Asbury was constantly ill during the entire period of his great work. One has only to read his journal to see how he suffered continually from headaches, fevers, chills, colds, rheumatism and other bodily afflictions which result from exposure and overwork. It was often necessary for Asbury to use crutches. At other times he had to be helped on and lifted from his horse by friends.

Asbury refused to allow sickness to stop his great work. He was essentially a man of action; such intense action that he had no time to consider his health. He worked even when ill. Henry Boehm often lifted Asbury from his horse and carried him in his arms to private homes and meeting-houses. There unable to stand he would seat himself and preach to the astonishment of the congregation. On one occasion Asbury wrote: "I have now been sick near ten months and many days closely confined; yet I have preached about three hundred times and rode 2,000 miles in that time, and though very often in a high fever." Once when he was supposed to be resting at Warm Sulphur Springs, Virginia, he proceeded to read a hundred pages a day, to pray in public five times a day, to deliver one open air sermon daily, and to hold a prayer meeting every night.

As Asbury grew older he became more feeble but even unto death he retained his spiritual enthusiasm. On one occasion he exclaimed: "I groan with pain one minute, and shout glory the next. If I only had health America should not hold me." In 1815, one year before his death, Asbury in conversation with Benjamin Paddock declared: "O, if I were young again, kingdoms and empires could not contain me." And as Duren says, "He died as he lived, with his face set toward the furthest outpost of civilization in the New World." In his last conference with Bishop McKendree, Asbury outlined the boundaries for five new conferences in the West. When his friends begged him to rest he would answer: "Labor here, rest hereafter." Seven days before his death he preached his last sermon. When death reached him he was on his way to the General Conference of 1816.

For his labors Asbury received the same compensation as granted to the itinerant preachers. His first salary was \$64 a year plus traveling expenses. Later it was raised to \$100 and traveling expenses. Out of this meager sum it was necessary for Asbury to provide himself with horses, traveling equipment, clothes and books, besides contributing to his needy parents and the poor preachers. At times Asbury was almost penniless. Once he wrote in his journal: "The Superintendent Bishop of the Methodist Church in America being reduced to two dollars, he was obliged to make his wants known." Again he said: "All the property I have gained is two old horses, the companions of my toil six thousand if not seven thousand miles a year." During his life Asbury received from friends some legacies but these he bequeathed to the Methodist Book Concern.



The labors and sacrifices of Francis Asbury were not in vain. It was he who laid the foundation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. When he became bishop there were only 14,988 Methodists in America. At his death thirty-two years later, there were 215,000 members and perhaps another 100,000 adherents to Methodism. Under his leadership the despised Methodism of the American Revolution became the outstanding religious phenomenon of America. The amazing growth of early American Methodism is due largely to that bishop whose only purpose in life was "to live to God, and to bring others so to do."

## § 2. THE KIND MAN

Bishop Francis Asbury's dynamic personality, restless energy, unparalleled administrative ability and crusading religious zeal, being of a more spectacular nature, have overshadowed his quality of tenderness, another great characteristic of his life. The average person thinks of Asbury as austere, but behind his solemn face was a spirit of love and affection. He was preëminently a kind man.

Throughout his life Asbury retained a childlike love for his parents, Joseph and Elizabeth Asbury. He was their only living child. His farewell to them when, at the age of twenty-six, he sailed for America proved to be their last meeting together on earth. Asbury never returned to England. Nevertheless as he toiled in the American wilderness he never forgot his parents. The remembrance of their goodness inspired him. "As my father and mother," wrote Asbury, "never disgraced me with an act of dishonesty, I hope to echo back the same sound of an hon-

est, upright man." Since his parents were very poor Asbury divided his meager income with them. Once when sending his mother and father a small remittance he told them: "I have sold my watch and library and would sell my shirt before you should want." Asbury's contemporaries have related how when others spoke of their mothers the bishop would weep, for it brought to him afresh the remembrance of his own mother living in solitude thousands of miles away.

Although as the presiding officer of the annual conferences Asbury at times seemed to be autocratic, he had in reality a father's love for all of his preachers. No one understood better than did Asbury the sufferings and hardships which the circuit riders had to face. To help his "poor boys" as he called them, Asbury annually started mite subscriptions for them. Upon his episcopal tours he collected funds, gratefully accepting even pennies for the assistance of the needy preachers. He divided his own money with the itinerants. After the Western Conference of 1806 Asbury noted in his journal: "The brethren were in want, and could not suit themselves; so I parted with my watch, my coat, and my shirt."

It was Asbury's regard for the physical welfare of his preachers that caused him to have his first portrait made. During the first twenty-three years in America he had continually refused the demands of friends for his likeness. It happened, however, that at the Baltimore Conference of 1794 the bishop found many of the ministers in dire need of clothing. This worried him. Asbury was being entertained during that conference at the home of James McCannon, a tailor by trade. Once while the bishop was in McCannon's shop, McCannon said to

him, "Brother Asbury, here is a piece of black velvet which I was thinking I would make up for the preachers, for some of them seem to be in great need."

The bishop overjoyed, replied, "Ah, James, that would be doing a good thing if you can afford it."

"O yes, I can afford it; but I expect to be paid a good price for it," responded McCannon.

"Price," exclaimed the bishop, "if it is price you are after, it is not worth while to talk any more about it."

"Come, come, Brother Asbury," rejoined McCannon, "you can pay my price, and be none the poorer for it."

"Why, how is that?" asked Asbury.

"Just this," answered McCannon, "if you will sit to a painter for your portrait, I will give the piece of velvet to the preachers and have it made up for them besides."

"Ah, James," said Asbury, "I believe you've got me now!"

Therefore because of the bishop's interest in his needy preachers the first of the very few portraits of Asbury was secured.

The tender spirit of Asbury is again shown by his sadness over departed friends. He never forgot the men and women who had befriended him in the early days of his pioneer ministry. Their deaths brought to him sorrow which he could not conceal. In 1815 while visiting the home of Governor Van Cortlandt, Asbury found the house lonely because his former host, "the dear aged man" had gone to his rest. Asbury often turned aside from his episcopal duties to go to the burial places of his old friends. After he had visited the grave of Mary Tiffin, wife of Governor Edward Tiffin of Ohio, Asbury wrote, "Within sight of this beautiful mansion lies the precious

dust of Mary Tiffin; it was as much as I could do to forbear weeping when I mused over her speaking grave—how mutely eloquent! Ah! the world knows little of my sorrows—little knows how dear to me are my friends and how deeply I feel their loss—but they all die in the Lord, and this shall comfort me.”

Asbury was always happy to meet the descendants of his early companions. They brought to his mind the acquaintances of past days. “I had powerful feelings of sympathy,” wrote Asbury, “for the children and grandchildren of that holy man in life and death, Philip Barratt.” He found that the children of his old friends wanted to take the place of their dead parents in entertaining him. On one occasion Asbury met the daughter of an old friend who wept at the sight of him because she remembered her departed father’s love for the bishop. Many evenings were made sacred in a lonely cabin on the frontier while Bishop Asbury related to the family the goodness of a sainted father or mother.

The gentleness of Asbury extended to the children. He loved them and won their confidence. That busy man found time to talk and play with the little ones. Many children so loved the bishop that they would run to meet him. One little boy upon seeing Bishop Asbury approaching rushed to his mother, crying, “Mother, I want my face washed and a clean apron on, for Bishop Asbury is coming, and I am sure he will hug me up.” When Asbury visited the family of his deceased itinerant, Henry Willis, he took the orphan children in his arms, kissed them and gave them his blessing. In his will Asbury instructed his executors to present a Bible to every child named after him up to his death. Under this provision Henry Boehm

supplied over four hundred children with Bibles and in addition he estimated that there must have been six hundred more namesakes who never learned of the contents of Asbury's will.

The great sympathy of Bishop Asbury extended "unto the least of these." He did not overlook the Indians and the slaves. As early as 1789 he made the following entry in his journal, "I wrote a letter to Cornplanter, chief of the Seneca nation of Indians. I hope God will shortly visit these outcasts of men, and send messengers to publish the glad tidings of salvation amongst them." Asbury visited the slaves, preached to them and held their class meetings. He begged the planters to be kind to their slaves. Once he wrote, "I was happy last evening with the poor slaves in brother Wells' kitchen, whilst our white brother held a sacramental love feast in the front parlor upstairs."

His horses also were the recipients of the bishop's affection. He was kind to the animals that bore him through the forests and swamps of early America. Whenever Asbury mentioned in his journal about his own weariness he usually told also of the hard labors of his horse. He parted with his worn-out horses with a sigh. Often tears came to his eyes as he remembered the services of "Spark," "Jane" and "Fox." In 1811 when the bishop sold Spark, he wrote in his journal, "when about to start he whickered after us; it went to my heart—poor slave; how much toil has he patiently endured for me!"

Asbury all through his life fought courageously for the principles which he believed to be true, yet he did not hold enmity against those who disagreed with him or even against those who would have harmed him. He tried to

be a true follower of the Prince of Peace. On April 10, 1775, he prayed: "Ah, Lord, help me to go through good and evil report; prosperity and adversity; storms and calms; kindness and unkindness; friends and enemies; life and death, in the spirit and practice of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!" He showed that spirit of magnanimity toward his enemies. In April, 1790, while Asbury was in the Holston country, he found that some lies had been told about him but "feeling myself innocent" he declared, "I was not moved." In 1792 an abusive anonymous letter came to him but he said, "I came from my knees to receive the letter, and having read it, I returned whence I came."

It is not surprising that Bishop Asbury had many friends. Towards the end of his life he found people everywhere trying to shower courtesies upon him. Such affection at times became too much for Asbury. Once he wrote, "I would not be loved to death, and so came down from my sick-room and took to the road, weak enough. Attentions constant, and kindness unceasing, have persued me to this place, and my strength increases daily."

Asbury's circle of friends included all classes of society. The poor frontiersmen looked upon him as their true friend; as a man who willingly accepted their crude hospitality. Men of wealth, position, and learning proudly claimed Asbury as their friend. Asbury often spent one night in a log cabin, the next night in a mansion. The home of Governor Edward Tiffin of Ohio was always open for the bishop as were also the homes of Judge Livingston and Governor Van Cortlandt of New York. In Maryland "Perry Hall," the beautiful country seat of Henry Gough, was Asbury's regular stopping place. Gov-

ernor Richard Bassett of Delaware held Asbury in such high esteem that he often traveled many miles to see him.

History has furnished very few men of Asbury's type; persons who combined in their lives both a crusading zeal and a tender spirit. Bishop Asbury traveled on horseback a distance of more than ten times around the globe. He preached on an average of one sermon a day during his long ministry. He suffered hardships, was constantly ill and was severely denounced by his enemies. Still he never lost his quality of kindness. Asbury's love for his parents, his sadness at the graves of departed friends, his solicitude for the poor preachers, his sympathy for slaves and Indians, and his kindness to children, enemies and dumb animals, mark him a man of deep emotion and affection.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CIRCUIT RIDER

#### § 1. SEEKING THE LOST



EARLY American Methodism interpreted literally the Saviour's commandment: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." To Bishop Asbury those words meant that Christianity was to be carried not only to the crowded centers of population but also to the frontier and to the out-of-way places; not only to the wealthy and cultured, but also to the poor and neglected classes of society.

In order to go into all parts of America in search of souls Methodism adopted a program different from that of the older churches. Instead of allowing the preachers to remain at one place and minister only to the people there, Methodism sent them to circuits. The preacher was instructed to travel a circuit and to carry from cabin to cabin the message of salvation. Because the preacher rode horseback over his circuit he was soon called the "circuit rider"; perhaps the most heroic and romantic term in Methodism.

The circuits were made large in order to care for as many people as possible with the small number of preachers available. Even with the preacher traveling every day, it required twenty-eight days to cover the average circuit. Some of the early circuits were even larger. James B. Finley's first appointment, Wills Creek circuit, had a circumference of four hundred and seventy-five miles. When Jeremiah Lambert was assigned to the Holston circuit it included all of Eastern Tennessee and



part of Virginia. John Johnson had a circuit in Kentucky that covered a thousand miles of territory. In 1804 all of Illinois was assigned to Benjamin Young, while in 1807 a preacher was given all of the Missouri territory as his circuit.

To cover these large circuits Methodism made use of the horse. In fact the horse was an indispensable part of the Methodist machinery of evangelization. With roads which were really only bridle paths it was only by traveling on horseback that the ministers could have met their preaching engagements. Thomas Finney once said: "In the former times, the horse was an institution of Methodism and, for a long time, the universal locomotive of the Itinerancy." The faithful horse played a vital part in saving souls in early America.

Since the horse was so necessary to the Methodist itinerancy it is not surprising that great concern was shown by the preachers for their animals. The horse was even mentioned in the first Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. One rule for the preachers was: "Be merciful to your beast. Not only ride moderately, but see with your own eyes that your horse be rubbed, and fed." In their prayers the circuit riders would often remember their animals. The preachers would sacrifice for them. James Erwin writes: "If we had but twenty-five cents we would spend it cheerfully for oats, and keep fast days ourselves, for the faithful animals that carried us over those weary roads must be rewarded for their fidelity." The preacher's horse received special attention at the homes of Methodist laymen. "Every farm boy," declared Thomas Finney, "held him in respect as a sacred animal, and treated him as the aristocracy of the barn-yard."

A genuine friendship arose between the circuit rider and his horse. Together they faced the hardships of itinerant life. Many a Methodist preacher was saved from death because his horse carried him safely through perilous places. The horse listened patiently to many a practice sermon which was preached as the minister rode through the country. The preachers would mention their horses in their journals. Granville Moody wrote concerning his horse: "For four successive years this animal never missed an appointment. With me she shared all the labors of travel, always on time, always ready, always willing. She endeared herself to me and mine. If there is a future for animals, I shall be glad to meet Nelly there." Often when a horse became too old for active service the preacher would seek a good home for his faithful friend.

The death of a horse was a severe blow both to the circuit rider and to the Methodist cause, for it was impossible for a preacher to walk around his circuit. A minister in Iowa who had lost his horse was informed by the quarterly conference that until he could procure another horse, he might as well return home. It was a customary thing to take a collection at the annual conferences for the brethren who had lost their horses during the year. The minutes of the Genesee Conference of 1812 state: "The sum of \$12.10 was taken by collection for Brother Lee on account of the loss of his horse."

In order to gain time in their great work the Methodist circuit riders traveled light. Bishop Asbury once declared that the necessary equipment of a Methodist preacher was a horse, a saddle and bridle, a suit of clothes, a watch, a pocket Bible and a hymn book. The circuit rider was able to put all his belongings into his

saddle-bags. It used to be stated that the Methodist preachers kept house in their saddle-bags. So important were the saddle-bags to the ministers that one historian has written: "Had you offered them a doctorate or a good pair of saddle-bags they probably would have chosen the latter."

Early Methodism was not content with holding religious services only on Sunday. Scattered as the people were over the frontier it would have been impossible to have ever reached them by Sunday services alone. Also the circuit rider would have felt it a sin to have been idle during the week. His commission was to preach and to preach every day. So Methodism adopted week-day preaching; holding services usually at noon.

Strange as it may seem today people flocked to the week-day services. They did not complain of the loss of time by attending preaching. Instead they deplored the fact that the minister could come but once a month. Thus while preachers of other denominations were giving but one day in seven to preaching, the Methodist circuit rider spoke every day and thereby touched people who never would have been reached by the stationary preachers.

In order to carry out the great commission the Methodist ministers could not wait for churches to be built before divine services could be held. Instead of churches the preachers used private houses, barns, taverns or school houses. Often they preached out in the open. When the circuit rider went into a new neighborhood he would go from home to home until he found one "open for preaching," and it became the "church" for that section. As late as 1822 only one of the twenty preaching places on the Vincennes circuit in Indiana was in a meeting house.

The appointments on that circuit read like this: "Father Stone's, J. Hatten's, Meriday's, A. Miller's, Richard Posey's, Thomas Jordan's," etc.

In the small log cabins the circuit rider preached to the people. For a pulpit he used a chair upon which he placed his Bible and hymn book. The women were seated upon the beds or upon boards stretched across chairs, while the children would climb to the loft. In fair weather the men congregated outside the cabin. In order that he might be heard by all the minister would stand in the doorway while he preached. George Crooks in the following words has beautifully described such a gathering: "The tethered horses, the waving grain without, the deep silence of nature, undisturbed save by the song of the rustic worshippers or the voice of the preacher, blended into a scene which no one who has been a participant in such a scene can ever forget."

The circuit rider preached even if the audience was small. In busy seasons of the year the congregations might consist only of women but regardless of the number a service would be held. Some ministers like George Washington Ivey, would preach at every appointment even though he had not a single hearer. "It is my business to preach," declared Ivey, "and the Lord's business to furnish the congregation." Many a frontiersman's heart was strangely warmed when, with only a handful of friends, he listened to the message of the circuit rider.

In the Methodist scheme of evangelization the preacher had to be always on the go. Several times a month he might pause at some home, usually called the "preacher's home," where he could have his washing and mending done. On all other days he would be at his work. He

lived a strenuous life. Rising early in the morning he read his Bible, had prayer with the family, had breakfast before dawn and by sunrise he was ready to go to the next appointment which might either be ten or thirty miles away. On the way there he would study his sermon. After preaching to the congregation he would baptize the children and hold a class meeting. The evening would be spent in study or in conversation with the people. Day after day and month after month this routine was repeated.

The early Methodist circuits in the West were named after rivers, creeks and valleys. In 1800 eight of the nine circuits in the Western Conference had the name of a stream. Such was the case because the Methodist bishops sent preachers to the places where the frontiersmen would most likely locate. At the Illinois Conference of 1839 Bishop Morris announced that he was going to organize Iowa into a presiding elder's district. When he was told that there were only a few people there, Morris replied: "Still I shall form a district, and one of you young men will have charge of it. For I have passed people enough between this and Cincinnati, bound for Iowa to form a district, and I am resolved to have it. Give me the names of creeks, groves, prairies, settlements, or anything suitable to designate the localities of the new comers." In such manner did the early Methodists seek the lost.

The Methodist plan was a success. It was perhaps the only method by which the scattered settlers could have been reached. As the task of the Methodist preachers was to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, they took as their motto, "Wherever men can go for money, we can go for the love of Christ and for

souls." They did their work so well that Bennett has said: "Scarcely had the hardy pioneer nailed the slab on his rude hut, before the preacher had entered to bless it by his prayers and to consecrate it to the service of God as a Bethel in the wilderness."

Leaders of other denominations testify to the ability of the Methodists to reach people in the out-of-way places. The story of Joseph Huber, a Presbyterian minister, is typical. Huber made a tour through the mountains of Kentucky, distributing religious tracts to the people. He found to his amazement that the Methodist preachers had preceded him wherever he went. At length he resolved to locate a place where they had not been. Traveling into the roughest sections of the mountains he at last found a rude pioneer mountain hut. It was so far from civilization that Huber said to himself that he had finally reached a place where no Methodist had entered. But immediately upon entering he saw a religious tract in that poor hut. Upon inquiry he was told that it had been left by a Methodist preacher. In telling the story Huber said: "I remained all night, was treated with hospitality, gave the family my blessing and my prayers, but never afterward looked for any place among the poor where a Methodist preacher had not been."

Once a traveler employed a guide to take him through the swamps of Louisiana. While passing through a desolate section they heard, as they thought, the noise of a wild animal crashing through the cane-brakes.

"What can it be?" asked the man of his guide.

"It must be a bar (bear) or a Methodist preacher," was the reply, "for nothing else would try to travel along thar."

It proved to be a Methodist preacher.

## § 2. GOD'S FLYING CAVALRY

As long as heroism is admired so long will the early Methodist circuit riders of America be praised for the fighting spirit which they showed in the face of the perils of frontier life. "Christianity in earnest" has been the historic definition of Methodism, but "Christianity with its sleeves rolled up" is a more appropriate description of the Methodism which was propagated by the first and second generations of Methodist preachers in America. It is doubtful if there was ever another group of men cast in such a heroic mold. So noble was the work of these men in the West that they have been designated as "a peculiar race, raised up under God for the special work to which they were called." The majority of them were like Hope Hull whom Bishop Coke called "a flame of fire."

When the circuit riders began their work on the frontier, Indians were still a constant menace to the whites. The preachers did not postpone their ministry, however, until the Indians had been conquered. Instead, they deliberately went into the Indian country. In 1787 John Tunnell asked for more circuit riders to come to East Tennessee, but he ended his letter with these words: "Let no one come who is afraid to die; their lives will often be in jeopardy from the red men of the wilderness." It was in the face of such danger that the circuit riders volunteered for the West. They went across the mountains hand and hand with the frontiersmen. Often at the early Methodist conferences in the West when the roll was called some friend would have to answer for the absent brother with these words: "Killed by the Indians."

To defend themselves against the Indians the preachers adopted martial tactics. They traveled their circuits equipped with carnal weapons, ready either to preach to the whites or to fight the Indians. Often at meetings in the extreme West pistols and rifles were as common as Bibles and hymn books. An incident is told of Bishop Asbury who, while traveling with a group through the Indian country, received a report that the Indians were surrounding his party. The men prepared at once to protect themselves. The report, however, proved to be false. After the danger was passed one man asked Bishop Asbury if he did not feel for his faith when he thought the Indians were upon them. The bishop replied, "I felt for my gun."

It can always be said to the honor of the Methodist preachers that even during Indian wars they met their appointments. Sometimes friends would form military guards for the ministers, but more often they faced the dangers alone. Divine services were held with armed men stationed on watch to guard against Indian attacks. It took more than the Creeks, the Cherokees and the Choctaws to cause a circuit rider to abandon his work.

The circuit rider was not daunted by inclement weather. It was considered a cowardly act for a Methodist preacher to miss an appointment because of weather. Bishop Asbury insisted that rain was not to be heeded at all, at least not "unless it rained hard enough to drown a duck." When William Milburn began his itinerant career an old preacher said to him: "Billy, my son, never miss an appointment. Ride all day in any storm, or all night if necessary, ford creeks, swim rivers, run the risk of breaking your neck, or getting drowned, but never miss an appointment and never be behind the time."



The preachers did meet their appointments regardless of the elements. Bishop Asbury wrote in 1786: "Preached at Morgan Bryan's. Next day I set off in the rain, and traveled with it. We swam Grant's creek and reached Salisbury in the evening, wet and weary. I thought we should scarcely have any preachers at the time appointed, but the bad weather did not stop their coming." James Jenkins after twenty-three years of itinerant service was able to say that he had neglected but two appointments on account of weather. Those early circuit riders were so sure to meet their appointments that it became a proverbial saying in bad weather: "There is nothing out today but crows and Methodist preachers."

In addition to the Indians and the weather the circuit riders had to face the "bad men" of early America. There was on the frontier no police protection for the preacher. He worked in a civilization where men were almost a law unto themselves. It was a common occurrence for rowdies to attend a Methodist service with the intention of breaking up the meeting. Drunken men would endeavor to interrupt the preacher in the midst of his discourse. Sinners who heard themselves denounced by the preacher or who saw how the profits from their vices were being hurt by the Methodist message, banded together to do physical harm to the Methodist preachers.

The Methodist preachers did not flinch before such opposition. Courage became an outstanding characteristic of those early circuit riders. They met the physical attacks of the sinners by giving blow for blow. There arose among those men a "sanctified pugnacity." Josiah Everett argued that God had never made his arm to be whipped by a sinner. Peter Cartwright said: "I did not

permit myself to believe any man could whip me till it was tried." Many of the circuit riders adopted the attitude of William Mulkey of the Texas Conference who, when asked what he would do should a wicked man approach him and tell him that he was going to whip him, answered: "I would say to him—'Sir, if the Lord gives me grace, I will bear it; but if not, woe be to your hide'."

Many an early Methodist victory was won by "knock-down and drag-out" methods. In 1812 during a camp meeting at Rushville, Ohio, a riot was started by twenty drunken men who had come for the purpose of whipping the Methodists. When the sheriff was unable to keep order the preachers and laymen entered the conflict and completely thrashed the ruffians. When quiet was restored Bisop Asbury went into the preachers' stand and stated that he wished to give some advice to the rowdies. He said: "You must remember that all our brothers in the Church are not yet sanctified, I advise you to let them alone; for if you get them angry and the devil should get in them, they are the strongest and hardest men to fight and conquer in the world. I advise you, if you do not like them, to go home and let them alone."

The administering of a whipping by a circuit rider to a sinner was often the best method of conversion. Once Peter Cartwright, upon coming to a ferry on the Sangamon river, found the ferryman telling a crowd that if that old renegade, Peter Cartwright, ever came that way he would drown him in the river. Cartwright listened to the harangue. He then rode his horse into the boat and the ferryman began to row him across the river. About half way over Cartwright informed the ferryman that he was the old renegade, Peter Cartwright, who was to be drown-

ed in the river. So there in the middle of the stream, in full view of the people on the bank, Cartwright fought the ferryman. Cartwright being a strong man soon had his opponent at his mercy. Seizing him by the neck and the trousers Cartwright immersed the man in the water, saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the devil, whose child thou art." Then Cartwright dragged the man into the ferry and asked him: "Did you ever pray?"

"No," answered the struggling and choking ferryman.

"Then it's time you did," said Cartwright. "I'll teach you; say, 'Our Father who art in heaven.'"

"I won't," replied the man.

Cartwright immersed him again and again in the water until the ferryman, barely able to breathe, muttered, "I will do anything." Then he repeated after Cartwright the Lord's Prayer.

Before the ferryman was released Cartwright made him promise to repeat the Lord's Prayer every morning and evening; to take every Methodist preacher across the river free of charge; and to attend every Methodist service within the radius of five miles.

Those early Methodist preachers did not stand in awe before great personalities. They gave the same fearless message to all classes. In 1817 when Joseph Mitchell preached in Detroit he found the governor, the civil and military officers and the social leaders in his audience. The text of his message was "Ye must be born again." During his fiery sermon he turned to the leaders and cried: "You Governor! you lawyers! you judges! you doctors! you must be converted and be born again, or God will damn you as soon as the beggar on the dung hill." Some in the audience feared that Mitchell would have to suffer for dar-

ing to speak in this manner to the dignitaries. The next morning, however, Governor Cass sent Mitchell five dollars, informing him that his sermon was the best he had ever heard.

It can easily be seen how the Methodist preachers won the respect of all classes of people. Their bravery in the face of peril won the admiration of both saint and sinner. Those men possessed something which appealed to the people. In 1848 when the workers at a log camp in Wisconsin wanted a preacher they took a vote as to the kind of man to secure. By an almost unanimous vote the men asked for a Methodist. In their letter of appeal they said the reason they asked for a Methodist preacher was because they knew he would have more "go-aheaditiveness." Edward Thomson, whose father was a Baptist and mother an Anglican, joined the Methodists, "because they made a business of religion." He later became Bishop Thomson.

Regardless of what may be the spirit of the Methodist preachers today it shall always be to the glory of Methodism to have once produced men who never flinched before danger. It is thrilling to remember a day when a Conference (the South Carolina) passed the following resolution: "If any preacher shall desert his station through fear, in time of sickness or danger, the Conference shall never employ that man again." Oh, that the Methodist preachers of today might have the spirit of those early circuit riders who sang:

"We want no cowards in our band  
Who will our colors fly;  
But call for valiant hearted men  
Who are not afraid to die."

## § 3. ENDURING HARDSHIPS

Perhaps there are some modern Methodist preachers who feel that they endure hardships; that they are called upon to make many sacrifices. Perhaps there are those who have grown weary of facing the difficulties which encounter the Methodist ministry of the twentieth century. If there are such men to be found in the ranks of the Methodist ministry they need to recall that heroic period in American Methodism when the circuit riders not only faced hardships but they also actually died at their posts of duty.

The early Methodist itinerants suffered from exposure to the elements. Rain was a great adversary. As the preachers worked in sparsely settled regions, they were forced to travel on horseback through rain and storms. Because of the lack of bridges and ferries, the circuit riders had to swim creeks and rivers and accordingly often completed their journeys in wet clothes. Elisha M. Bowman, an itinerant in Louisiana, wrote in 1816: "Every day that I travel I have to swim through creeks or swamps, and I am wet from my head to my feet, and some days from morning till night I am dripping with water."

In winter the cold weather added to the privations of the circuit riders. In the Northern States some of the preachers carried shovels with which they cut paths through snowdrifts on their circuits. In December, 1831, Alfred Brunson while riding to an appointment had his ears and thighs frozen. Elijah Hedding in 1802, because his horse was unable to travel over the half-frozen roads, tried to cover parts of his circuit on foot. Concerning his experience, Hedding said: "Frequently I would break

through the ice and the frozen mud in the swamps and woods, turning my boots and keeping my feet wet most of the time."

It is not strange that the preachers were often ill for such exposure gave them colds, pneumonia, fever and rheumatism. Only the most serious illness, however, caused them to stop their work. James Jenkins while on the Bladen circuit in North Carolina wrote: "In the fall I took fever, and had to stop one day to take medicine, but got my appointment filled. The next day I rode with fever on me." Bishop Morris, while an itinerant suffered severely from rheumatism. This did not end his ministry even though he had to be lifted from his horse and had to sit in a chair while he delivered his sermons.

Indians and wild animals added to the hardships of the itinerants. The preachers as they rode through the forests had no assurance that an hostile Indian or a hungry animal did not lurk behind a tree. To protect themselves from these marauders the ministers carried weapons. While Henry B. Bascom was dining with a family on the frontier, a panther sprang upon a child in the doorway of the cabin and, before Bascom could shoot, the child was killed by the animal. Every night that an itinerant was forced to sleep in the open he exposed himself to reptiles, wild beasts and savages.

The circuit riders contracted contagious diseases from sleeping in the dirty beds of the frontier cabins. On one occasion Bishop Asbury remarked that the only security against these contagious diseases was to sleep in a brimstone shirt. The itinerants were also attacked by fleas. It is not surprising that they encountered such pests when Jesse Lee considered himself fortunate to find a lodging

in a certain section of South Carolina, even though thirty or forty hogs were sleeping under the house. One Methodist preacher before retiring for the night was told by his host: "We have fleas here—they may trouble you. They used to trouble me once, but I have got used to them, and learned how to get along with them better than I once did. I think of Daniel in the lion's den, and pray to the God of Daniel to give me grace to endure their bite." Before morning came, the minister had occasion to remember Daniel.

The preachers often slept in the open. A circuit rider when unable to reach shelter would hitch his horse to the most protecting tree, select the most desirable spot, and sleep there, using his saddle-bags as a pillow and his blanket for a covering. In 1812 Richmond Nolley in order to reach his appointment on the Tombigbee river, slept eleven nights in the open before he reached his destination. Bishop Soule, late in life said: "I have slept on the earth with a bearskin for my couch and the heavens for my protection. I have bedded on snow from three to four feet deep with the heavens spread over me."

Unsanitary conditions prevailed in many of the pioneer homes visited by the circuit riders. In spite of their hunger it was often difficult for the itinerants to eat the food which was offered in many of the cabins. Colbert, a presiding elder, writing in 1803, declared that "a clean woman in some places is a rarity." William Cravens was unable to relish his dinner after he had seen his hostess in Tygert's Valley allow the blood from her wounded thumb run into the soup. Potatoes cooked in bear grease, served for breakfast, dinner and supper became unpalatable even to Methodist preachers. The presence of many

dirty children, who were entirely ignorant of table manners, did not stimulate an appetite. To assure himself of good food, J. P. Kent, while on the Detroit Mission, carried fishing tackle which he often used to secure his meals. On many occasions Bishop Asbury gave thanks for a luncheon which consisted only of a handful of nuts.

The preachers suffered because of the lack of clothing. In 1790 Bishop Asbury found the preachers of Tennessee "indifferently clad." Thomas Ware when assigned to the Caswell circuit in North Carolina wrote thus: "At the close of the conference I set out for my field of labor, poorly clad, and nearly penniless, but happy in God. My coat was worn through at the elbows; and I had not a whole undergarment left; and as for boots I had none." In 1794 the clothes of William Burke on the Salt River circuit, Kentucky, had been so mended that he had "patch upon patch, and patch by patch." On another occasion Burke was unable to buy an overcoat, so he protected himself from the cold by wearing a borrowed blanket. In 1798 James Jenkins lost one sleeve of his coat from the elbow down, but rather than lose time in endeavoring to secure a new coat he traveled his circuit for a time sleeveless in one arm.

The circuit riders did not have roads even as good as the worst over which the modern itinerants travel. The Methodist preachers in the West did not expect to obtain specific instructions on how to reach the next settlement; they were grateful if they were given general information as to the direction to be followed. Many of the ministers carried a pocket compass to aid them in charting their route. Often the preachers were in such frontier places that they had to blaze a trail to guide them on a



second trip. Hatchets and marking irons became the necessary tools for the pioneer itinerant.

It must also be remembered that the circuit riders who faced the hardships of the Methodist itinerancy were not experienced pioneers, but can best be described as "boys." Young men took Methodism to the frontier. Mere youths were licensed to preach. In 1789 Thomas Scott then only sixteen years old was appointed to the Gloucester circuit in Virginia. Henry B. Bascom was seventeen years old when he was given an appointment with twenty-seven preaching places. Joshua Soule became the presiding elder of the Maine district when he was twenty-three years of age. In the year 1799 nine out of every ten Methodist ministers were below forty years of age. Bishop Galloway used to say that thousands of the Methodist preachers were in the saddle and riding circuits before they were old enough to vote or needed to use a razor.

Methodism sent its leaders to premature graves. A study of the obituaries in the minutes of the early conferences shows that a Methodist minister's life was short. Only a few were able to stand for many years the hardships of the itinerancy. Jacob Young wrote in 1806: "When I joined the conference I was a healthy young man, blessed with as good a constitution as any man I ever knew. Four short years of an itinerant life had, to all appearance, wore me out." By the year 1847 nearly half of the Methodist preachers whose deaths were recorded, had fallen before they were thirty-five years of age, while two-thirds of them had died before they were able to render more than twelve years of itinerant service. That was the price paid by the early leaders that Methodism might exist. Is it any wonder that Methodism made pro-

gress when the preachers literally burned themselves out; when they did not stop to consider the question of life or death?

The American people soon came to recognize that the Methodist preachers were an heroic and sacrificing group; who in order to proclaim the gospel were willing to face difficulties and perils. The circuit riders secured an enviable reputation for bravery and suffering. A Baptist layman once declared: "What the Methodists can not do, no one need try." When Jesse Walker began his work in St. Louis, a Roman Catholic layman went to his priest and complained of the audacity of the Methodists in coming to that city.

"Never mind," said the priest, "they can't do much; if nothing else will do, we will starve them out."

"Starve them out," replied the layman, "why, they will live where a dog would starve to death."

When Elisha M. Bowman began to preach in New Orleans he was given such a cold reception that for a time he had to suspend work. An enemy of the Methodists began to boast that the Methodists had been forever driven from New Orleans. A man who knew the spirit of the Methodist preachers replied that there was no occasion for boasting because once the Methodists began a work they would never give it up, "as long as their itinerants could get a cowhide to sleep on and sweet potatoes to eat."

It was in the face of dangers and perils that the early Methodist preachers carried on their great work. Methodism made progress because it could endure hardships. As Strickland has so strikingly written, American Methodism "lodged roughly and fared scantily. It tramped up muddy ridges, it swam or forded rivers to the waist,

it slept on leaves or raw deer skin, or pillowed its head on saddle bags, it bivouacked among wolves or Indians; now it suffered from ticks or mosquitoes; it was attacked by dogs, it was hooted and it was pelted; the hurricane blew down trees across its path; it lost its way in the woods, it was stricken by fever and wasted by pestilence, it was fined, maltreated, and imprisoned, but it throve."

#### § 4. THEY TALKED WITH GOD

The Methodist circuit riders were men of power because they were men of prayer. They felt a sense of dependence upon the Almighty and therefore daily and almost hourly they asked for divine guidance and assistance. The early Methodist preachers did not enter the itinerancy depending upon their own strength but upon that power which came from communion with God.

Francis Asbury, the great pioneer Methodist bishop, was a man of prayer. Freeborn Garrettson says of him: "He prayed the most and best of any man I ever knew." When traveling on the road Asbury made it a practice to pray ten minutes of each hour. In the first years of his work in America, Asbury would name each individual church and preacher in his prayers, but the growth in number of churches and itinerants soon made this impossible. Asbury's journal is filled with statements such as:

"I always find the Lord present when I go to the throne of grace."

"I went alone into the woods, and found my soul profitably solitary in sweet meditation and prayer."

"I poured out my soul to God in the granary and was refreshed in my spirit."

A prayer by Bishop Asbury in some small cabin was sufficient pay for his entertainment. His prayers settled debts in even larger circles. In 1811 while Bishop Asbury was ill at Germantown, Pennsylvania, he was visited by two physicians, one of whom was the famous Doctor Benjamin Rush. When the bishop inquired as to their fees they answered, "Nothing: only an interest in your prayers." Asbury at once replied, "As I do not like to be in debt we will pray now." He knelt and in a fervent prayer asked God to bless the physicians and to reward them for their kindness to him."

Diaries of the preachers reveal the fact that prayer was a vital part in the daily life of the itinerants. A few excerpts from the journal of Henry B. Bascom are typical:

"Felt very low in spirits; resorted to the woods and prayed."

"Rose before sunrise, prayed with the family; retired to the woods, where I found the Lord precious."

"Wrestled in prayer at my bedside, then went to the woods and prayed."

The Methodist itinerants went from their knees to the pulpit. Bishop Asbury once instructed a group of young preachers to always go into the pulpit from their closets, thereby taking with them "hearts full of fresh water from heaven." In fact the circuit rider would have been afraid to face a congregation unless prior upon bended knees he had sought divine aid. He feared that without the help of God he would be confuted before the people. Of John Summerfield, the great Methodist preacher, it has been said that he not only prayed before and after each sermon, "but he seemed to be praying while he

preached, invoking blessings for, while he pleaded with sinners and saints." Often at camp meetings while one minister was preaching others would be in the preachers' tent beseeching God to give power and spirit to the speaker.

The preachers carried their prayer life into the homes of the people. Their calls were more of a spiritual than social nature. John Wesley Childs before he would even seat himself prayed that divine blessing be shown to the home. The ministers orally thanked God for each meal. Before retiring at night they read a portion of the Scripture to the members of the family and then implored God to protect them during the night. In the morning before the circuit rider departed upon his journey to another appointment he assembled the family for morning devotions. When the preachers were forced to lodge at an inn they invited the other guests to join with them in their evening prayers.

The pioneer Methodists believed that kneeling was the correct posture for prayer. "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," and, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," were scriptural proofs for them. One rarely, if ever, saw an early Methodist standing or sitting during prayer. A quarterly conference at Williamstown, Vermont on June 8, 1839, resolved that, "we consider the sitting posture, in time of prayer, irreverent for persons in health, under ordinary circumstances."

The exigencies of the time caused the circuit riders to lift their voices to God in private prayer from various and unusual places. There were no individual rooms in the cabins for private devotions. It was therefore in the

woods or in the barns that prayers were offered. Bennett has stated that during the winter months the preachers "knelt on their cloaks on the frozen ground, at the root of some giant tree with its bare limbs and crisp leaves overhead, or in the barn among the grain and straw, or in the chilly lofts in the stillness of night." Those Methodist itinerants not only covered the frontier with horseshoe prints, but they left also the marks of human knees wherever they crusaded.

The Methodist itinerants refused to read prayers for they did not believe in formal prayers. John Wesley had sent to America a prayer book to be used by the Methodist ministers but it was soon discarded by them. According to Jesse Lee the preachers were "fully satisfied that they could pray better and with more devotion with their eyes shut than they could with their eyes open." They knew the needs of the people they served and they expressed those desires in simple, informal prayer. The preachers and laymen often waxed perhaps too eloquent in prayer. For example, Brother Conroy on the Miami circuit in Ohio prayed that God would "blow out the false alluring lights of hell, that voyagers on this rocky reef may keep aloof from the maelstrom and coast of perdition, and cross the Pacific Ocean of gospel grace, and land on the far-off flowery shore where the Captain of our salvation receives believing men to the Eden of love."

The Methodist preachers, because they were men of prayer, affected the people. Conviction came upon a home when the itinerants prayed as men talking face to face with God. James Jenkins relates the story of an irreligious young man who was so fearful that the power of God would take hold of him while the circuit rider

prayed in his father-in-law's home that he continually stirred the open fire during the prayer. A Mr. Foster upon hearing Tobias Gibson pray at Washington, Mississippi in 1799, said to his wife, "Rachel, he prayed like he was right close up to God, and was assured that God would answer his prayers. How different from the mumbling we sometimes hear from the priests at Natchez!" As McFerrin says the preachers "carried with them into every family and circle their ministerial gravity, and a solemn sense of the presence of God and of the awful and responsible nature of their mission."

Through the influence of the itinerants prayer became a vital part of the life of the laymen. When a man became a Methodist he was expected to pray both in private and in public. The next step after conversion was the erection of a family altar. There was grave doubt about the religion of a Methodist head of a family who neglected to hold evening devotions in his home. So prominent was the prayer element in the life of the Methodists that a minister of another church once asked Reverend John Ray, "Why is it that all the members of your church pray, both in public and in their families?"

"They practice," was Ray's reply.

The "Methodist mourner's bench" came into existence as one of the early institutions of the Church in America. It started because awakened sinners were so affected by the preacher's message that they knelt at their seats and begged help of God. In addition to the confusion which this created it was also difficult for the minister to come to each person and give consolation and help. As a result the preacher invited those who desired to live

a better life to come and kneel at the front of the church. There the leaders could more easily give advice to each seeking soul. Soon the churches were constructed with an altar rail and with adequate space for the mourners. It was especially at camp meetings that the mourner's bench played an important part. It was used not only by sinners but also by devout members.

The early Methodists were happy in their prayer life. It brought joy into their lives. "Amen," "Glory to God," and "Hallelujah," were shouted by the members during the prayer of the minister or of a devout brother or sister. The term, "noisy, shouting Methodists," came into vogue because of the happy spirit shown by the Methodists during their religious services. An "Amen corner" in every church became a characteristic of American Methodism.

Prayer was usually the preachers' last act before death. They died with prayer and praise upon their lips. Richmond Nolley, a pioneer Methodist itinerant in Mississippi and Louisiana, was sent by his conference to the Attakapas circuit in Louisiana. On the way to the circuit he died alone in an isolated place from exposure and exhaustion. When Nolley was found "his knees were muddy, and the indentures made by them on the ground marked the spot where he had knelt in prayer." Realizing that death was upon him Nolley had fallen upon his knees to commend his soul to his Maker.

#### § 5. "SILVER AND GOLD HAVE I NONE" Acts 3:6

The apostle Peter was not the only man who had neither silver nor gold. Practically every early Methodist preacher of America was in a similar condition. Meth-



odism was started in America by men who preached without promise of financial assistance. The early Methodist leaders reacted against the hireling attitude of the Anglican clergy who demanded fees for baptism, marriage and other ministerial functions. "Freely we have received and freely we will give," was the declaration of the Christmas Conference. "If we do not benefit the people, we have but little of their money," remarked Bishop Asbury in 1799.

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 it was decided that all preachers should receive the uniform salary of \$64 a year. In 1792 this amount was increased by allowing traveling expenses but that item included only ferriage, turnpike and bridge tolls, horseshoeing, and food and lodging for the preacher and horse when unable to secure it gratis. In 1800 the allowance was raised to \$80, over the protest of many ministers; in 1816 it was increased to \$100. This salary schedule applied only to single men. A married preacher was allowed an amount for the support of his wife equal to the sum allotted to himself, plus a smaller sum for each child.

There were no perquisites for the preachers. The ministers at the Christmas Conference asserted that "we will on no account whatsoever suffer any elder or deacon among us to receive a fee or present for administering the ordinance of marriage, baptism, or the burial of the dead." In 1792 the prohibition regarding marriage fees was removed, but it was not until 1828 that a Methodist minister was allowed to even receive a present for administering baptism or for burying the dead. Until 1800 the preachers were required to report every donation.

It is difficult to understand how the preachers, even though their needs were comparatively small, could exist upon the disciplinary allowance. Furthermore it is a sad fact that they seldom received their meager salaries in full. It was an exception for a minister to secure his entire salary. Elijah Hedding, who later became a bishop, received in 1807 the sum of \$4.25. Henry B. Bascom who also was made bishop traveled three thousand miles and preached to four hundred congregations in 1815 for which service he was given \$12.10. In 1816 twenty preaching appointments on the Salisbury circuit, North Carolina, gave \$37.94 to be divided between the preacher and the presiding elder. In 1830 William Landrum, a preacher in Kentucky, had to travel two hundred miles to reach his new circuit. His first quarterly conference allowed him twenty-five cents to meet this expense. Many other similar illustrations could be given but hardly any could exceed the following record from the minutes of the fourth quarterly conference of the Montgomery circuit, Texas, in 1842.

“What are the collections this quarter? Not one cent. On motion it was ordered we now adjourn.”

Not only did the preachers fail to receive their entire salary or “quarterage” as it was commonly called but they were given a greater part of it in kind. That is why the old Methodist steward’s books are filled with credits to members for leather, linen, linsey, socks, shirts, and shoes. Daniel Seager was paid a large part of his salary on the Danville circuit, Genesee Conference, in 1819 with rye. As he could not sell it to make whiskey he

was forced to trade it for cattle and after several years was able to sell them for cash. At a quarterly conference held in September, 1795, at Beal's Meeting House, North Carolina, the presiding elder asked, "How much has been contributed for the support of the ministry?" Charles Ledbetter, the minister, without saying a word held up a pair of socks.

Attempts were made by the Church to assist the underpaid ministers. The General Conference of 1796 established a "Chartered Fund" to which gifts were to be made for the relief of the preachers. After the Book Concern was established the profits from the sale of Methodist books were divided among the needy preachers and their dependents. The ministers who received a surplus above the allotted salary were required to turn it over to their annual conference to help those who had not secured their full allowance. The bishops started mite subscriptions for the ministers. Preacher's Aid Societies were organized in some annual conferences to which each minister gave every year a small amount into a general fund to be used for the brothers who were financially embarrassed. Public collections were also taken at the conference sessions.

One of the first acts at the opening of an annual conference was the appointment of a Claims Committee the duty of which was to ascertain the deficiencies of the preachers and to divide among the most needy the funds which came from the Book Concern, the Chartered Fund, and other sources. These financial committees, however, were able to offer only a small amount of relief. In 1811 there was a deficit of \$3,042.61½ in the Western Conference with only \$427.19 available to offset it.

It is a sad commentary upon the Methodist Episcopal Church that loyal servants were allowed to suffer in this manner. It must be admitted, however, that the preachers were partly to blame for this condition. They were too prone to boast that they were not mercenary; that they preached for souls not money. Bishop Asbury urged the preachers to avoid any desire for money, and sometimes in public he prayed that the itinerants might be kept poor. The circuit riders educated the people to believe that a life of ministerial poverty produced the greatest preachers. It did not take much argument to convince parsimonious listeners that this viewpoint was correct.

It is also true that the majority of the Methodist people were very poor. They could not understand why the preacher should be given much money. Was he not furnished with food, lodging and clothing? What else did he need? In some ways the laymen were liberal toward the Church. Men who grudgingly gave twenty-five cents to an almost ragged preacher would willingly entertain an entire quarterly conference at their homes from Friday until Monday. Their houses were always open to the circuit riders. "No, we never charge a preacher anything," was their answer to the itinerants who lodged with them. They would take loads of provisions to camp meeting. They would give a broken-down preacher a permanent place in their home. The difficulty was that the laymen in doing these noble acts felt that they were fulfilling all their financial obligations to the Church.

Even with these facts in defense of the laymen it must be admitted that the majority of them reveled in and were proud of their "cheap religion." Many men

really believed that "quarterage" meant giving a quarter of a dollar at each quarterly conference. One layman is known to have publicly given thanks that he had been a Methodist for many years, "and it never had cost him but a shilling." A. H. Redford relates the story of a class meeting where a good brother in testifying about the conversion of himself and family said, "And I owe it all, under God to Methodist preachers." At the conclusion of the talk Redford asked the man, "How much do you pay to aid in the support of your preachers?"

"I pay fifty cents a year," was his prompt reply.

When a Universalist preacher in Ohio charged the circuit riders with preaching only for money a Methodist replied, "Well, I don't think we have much reason to complain of being priest-ridden, for our preacher teaches our children, furnishes wood and candles, builds the fire, sweeps the house, attends our sick, buries our dead, and preaches for nothing—all for nothing."

Whether paid or unpaid, the Methodist itinerants continued to minister to the religious needs of the American people. Each year brought a larger number of young men into the itinerancy. In 1808 Bishop Asbury wrote: "Money with us is no article of faith, or term of union, or spring for traveling." When one preacher was asked why he continued his work when the Church allowed him to suffer he replied that he did not understand that his call to preach was conditional on support from the Church. When Glezen Fillmore was sent to Buffalo in 1818 he was informed by the Presbyterian preacher there that he had better leave because he could not be supported. "Well sir, I will then preach without a support," answered Fillmore.

The preachers gave freely of the small funds that came into their possession. At the annual conferences when the needy causes were presented they willingly opened their thin purses. Collections were taken among them for the brother who had been ill or who had lost his horse during the year. At the Rock River Conference of 1836 so great was the enthusiasm over a missionary speech that according to the record, "the preachers emptied their pockets so completely with contributions, many of them had to borrow money to return home."

It is a benediction and an inspiration to picture those men as they rode through the wildernesses of early America, giving without charge religious consolation to the frontiersmen. They had no homes and they had no money but they did have an assurance and a faith that overshadowed the material worries of life. As they traveled over their circuits they sang their philosophy in that sacred itinerant hymn:

"No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in the wilderness;  
A poor wayfaring man,  
I lodge awhile in tents below,  
And gladly wander to and fro,  
Till I my Canaan gain;  
There is my house and portion fair,  
My treasure and my heart are there,  
And my abiding home."

## § 6. METHODIST CELIBACY

"I believe the devil and the women will get all my preachers" was the indignant exclamation of Bishop Francis Asbury upon hearing that another one of his ministers had entered the state of matrimony. When he was told that his loyal bachelor preacher, Jonathan Jackson, had married, Asbury cried out in desperation: "Jonathan Jackson is married: O thou pattern of celibacy! Art thou caught? Who then can resist?"

If Bishop Asbury could have had his way he would have retained the celibacy which characterized the Methodist preachers when the church was organized. At the time of the Christmas Conference only eleven of the eighty-three Methodist preachers then in America were married. The first five bishops of the Church were single men. In fact in early American Methodism celibacy was so common among the clergy that it was said by one historian that "the marriage of a Methodist preacher was an occurrence almost as notable as a transit of Venus."

Bishop Asbury set the example of celibacy for his preachers. He never married. Once when asked why he had remained single he explained that in the first place he had always been too busy to marry. Next he argued that he was unwilling to ask any woman to share the hardships incident to his episcopal life; for he stated: "Amongst the duties imposed upon me by my office was that of traveling extensively, and I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace enough to enable her to live but one week out of fifty-two with her husband." Asbury felt that such an arrangement would have been wrong. "What right," he asked, "has any man to take advantage of the

affections of a woman, make her his wife, and by a voluntary absence subvert the whole order and economy of the marriage state?" Then he would add, "I had little money."

Even if the great bishop of Methodism never married why should he be so aroused by the marriage of his preachers? It was not because he was hostile to the institution of marriage but because the marriage of a Methodist preacher usually meant the loss of one more of his itinerants. On July 9, 1805, Asbury wrote in his journal: "Marriage is honorable in all—but to me it is a ceremony awful as death. Well may it be so, when I calculate we have lost the travelling labours of two hundred of the best men in America, or the world, by marriage and consequent location." Experienced ministers when married were usually unable to continue in the itinerancy and thus Asbury had to be continually filling the vacancies with inexperienced men. It was because marriage hindered the aggressive work of early Methodism that it was to Asbury a "ceremony awful as death."

If the married preachers remained in the itinerancy they were a burden to Asbury. It was difficult to find suitable appointments for them and to secure allowances for their wives. Once Asbury wrote: "Our preachers get wives and a home, and run to their dears almost every night; how can they by personal observation know the state of the families it is a part of their duty to watch over for good?" While presiding over the Baltimore Annual Conference in 1809 Asbury had so much difficulty in placing the married preachers that he lost his patience and declared in open conference: "I would not give one single preacher for a half dozen married ones."



The salary allowed the early Methodist preachers forced married men to discontinue in the itinerancy. The disciplinary allowance was based upon the needs of a single man; was estimated for those who had no domestic burdens. An annual income varying from \$128 to \$160 was too small to support a man and his wife. The allowance of \$16 a year for each child under six years, and of \$21.33 for each child between six and eleven years, was not adequate for the proper maintenance of children. Unless there were other sources of income very few married preachers were able to exist upon the disciplinary allowance. Even if the salary had been larger many ministers would have hesitated to subject their families to the hardships and privations of the itinerancy.

The Church endeavored by legislation to prevent marriage from depleting the ranks of the itinerancy. "Converse sparingly and cautiously with women; particularly with young women," and "Take no step toward marriage without first consulting with your brethren," were two rules placed in the first Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Up to 1836 the Methodist Book of Discipline required the preachers to remain single until admitted to conference.

The annual conferences also attempted to preserve the celibacy of its members. Conference after conference legislated against the marriage of the clergy. Preachers were denied ordination to the eldership if they broke the conference rule concerning early marriage. The conference minute books record many items on this subject. At the Tennessee Conference of 1820 Allen B. Dillard was discontinued for "having married in the course of the past year, and having changed his dress and conduct for the

worse." The following speech delivered by Lewis Myers at the South Carolina Annual Conference of 1811, regarding the marriage of preachers is typical of many addresses delivered upon conference floors during the first forty years of American Methodism. Myers said: "A young man comes to us and says he is called to preach. We answer, 'don't know.' He comes a second time, perhaps a third time, even a fourth time, saying, 'A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me, and woe be to me if I preach not the gospel.' Then we say to him, 'Go and try.' He goes and can hardly do it. We bear with him a little while and he does better. And just as we begin to hope he may make a preacher, Lo! he comes again to us and says, 'I must marry.' We say to him, 'If you marry, you will soon locate; go and preach.' 'No, I must marry. I must marry.' We say to him, 'A dispensation of the gospel is committed to you, and woe be unto you if you preach not the gospel.' 'But no,' he says, 'I must marry.' And he marries. It is enough to make an angel weep."

Of all the conferences the Virginia Conference was most opposed to the marriage of preachers. It was called the "Old Bachelor Conference." Of the eighty-four preachers present at the Virginia Conference of 1809, only three were married. Asbury was so happy over this that he wrote with great enthusiasm about the celibacy of the Virginia Conference. A preacher in that conference who married lost the respect of his fellow members.

The laymen agreed with Bishop Asbury in his opposition to married preachers, but their attitude was based somewhat upon a different motive. They considered that the wife of an itinerant hindered her husband's work and added to the expense of the Church. They laymen there-

fore urged the married preachers to discontinue in the itinerancy, telling them, "You ought to locate; we cannot support you." Unpleasant circumstances often resulted from the appointment of married ministers to certain circuits and stations. In 1828 when George A. Bain was appointed to Raleigh, North Carolina, the stewards protested to Bishop Soule. They claimed that they were unable to support a married man.

The frontier circuits wanted only single preachers. The members there were happy to entertain the itinerants in their homes, but they considered that a preacher's family was an unnecessary burden. When William Burke was assigned in 1802 to the Limestone circuit in Kentucky, he found the people so prejudiced against married preachers that he could find no home to board his wife, "either for love or money."

From all this agitation in the Church regarding the marriage of preachers it might be supposed that the itinerants were sought for by many women. The facts are to the contrary. Methodist ministers were not considered by loving parents nor by enterprising daughters as "good matches." In 1809 Bishop Asbury while in North Carolina wrote: "The high taste of these southern folks will not permit their families to be degraded by an alliance with a Methodist traveling preacher; and thus, involuntary celibacy is imposed upon us." This pleased Asbury for he added: "All the better." When L. B. Stateler asked for the hand of Melinda Purdom, her father, although he was fond of Stateler, objected to the marriage of his daughter to a Methodist preacher who wandered over the earth without a home.

It must also be admitted that many of the circuit riders had little to offer their prospective brides. They

had eccentricities that would have wrecked domestic life. Many of them were too engrossed with their work to even give attention to a courtship. Moses Brock, without any preliminaries, proposed to a lady informing her that his horse and saddle-bags were his only possessions. When she desired time to consider his proposal Brock answered: "Think it over while I eat an apple." Lorenzo Dow offered to marry Peggy Miller if she would be willing to allow him twelve out of thirteen months for travel and would promise never under any circumstances to ask him to break an appointment. He further informed her that if she should ever stand in the way of his work that he would "pray to God to remove her."

Regardless of the attitude of Bishop Asbury, of the legislation of the annual conferences, and of the opposition of the laymen, the preachers married. The result was that the majority of them were forced to locate. "Who are under a location through family concerns?" became one of the regular questions asked at the annual conferences. Between 1792-1800 two hundred and twenty-one members of the conference were forced to locate, the majority because of domestic burdens. By 1814 about one-half of all the preachers received into the conferences had been forced to find other occupations because of financial stress.

American Methodism suffered seriously from this condition. It deprived the Church of tried and experienced ministers. So depleted were the ranks of the Alabama Conference in 1836 by locations that Bishop Morris said there were plenty of able preachers in the bounds of the conference to supply the work but that "they were attending to their farms, their merchandise, etc." The vacant places

in that and other conferences had to be filled by untried men. Late in life Bishop Asbury declared that if so many of his preachers had not located the Methodists by that time would have taken the continent.

## § 7. AVOIDING SUPERFLUITY OF DRESS

Today it is almost impossible to recognize a Methodist preacher by his mode of dress. There are many Methodist ministers who might easily be mistaken by their appearance as business or professional men. Such, however, was not the case in early American Methodism. There was then among the circuit riders a uniformity of attire. They could be distinguished as far as they could be seen by their peculiar and somber appearance.

The outstanding note of the pioneer preacher's costume was its simplicity. It consisted first of a dark colored, straight-breasted cutaway coat which had a high standing collar and a forked or swallow tail. Under this coat was worn a plain straight-breasted waistcoat, sometimes fastened with hooks and eyes instead of buttons. Sometimes there was a black or white cravat. Knee trousers and long stockings were worn. Leggings were used in cold weather. A broad brimmed Quaker hat completed the outfit. Such attire can easily be recognized as the common dress of the early colonial period which, after the American Revolution, was supplanted by the frock coat and long trousers.

The early Methodist preachers clung to these garments because they felt that a man's apparel depicted his character and spiritual state. The circuit riders were not of this world; their hopes and aims were elsewhere. They

felt that they must express that feeling by avoiding the attire of fashionable society. If a minister should adopt the mode of the world it signified that he had yielded to the temptations of the flesh; that he had fallen from grace.

Those sincere circuit riders also considered it wicked to put much money into clothing when there were so many needy people in the world. Once when John Wesley Childs had bought material for a new suit he felt a cloud come over him, obscuring his vision of God. He then reflected that he could have been as comfortable in a cheaper suit and could have given the difference to the poor and destitute. Childs was so dejected that he wrote in his journal: "If God will pardon me in this instance I will, by his grace assisting me, do so no more."

A study of the journals of the early annual conferences reveals the fact that many resolutions were adopted to enforce uniformity and simplicity of clerical dress. In 1805 the Baltimore Conference declared that "in the future the preachers shall not have their waistcoats made with double breasts." In 1821 the same conference requested its members "to wear strait-breasted and plain coats." At the Illinois Conference of 1832 when it was found that some of the brethren had adopted worldly styles, Samuel Mitchell was asked to explain the old Methodist costume. After his speech the preachers agreed to wear thereafter plain, straight-breasted coats. In 1833 the ministers of the Tennessee Conference passed a resolution stating: "We deplore the extremes to which many of our preachers have gone in dress; therefore we pledge ourselves in future to endeavor to be more plain and Methodistic in our apparel."

The conferences did more than pass such legislation. Attempts were made to prevent the licensing of young preachers who did not adopt the Methodist ministerial garb. When George F. Pierce, later Bishop Pierce, came before his quarterly conference for a recommendation to preach, John Collinsworth, the minister of the circuit, objected to granting the license because Pierce wore a suit of broadcloth with brass buttons and a velvet collar. Pierce was given permission to preach only after he had explained that the blue broadcloth was his only presentable suit.

The laymen, believing that simplicity of dress contributed to ministerial humility and usefulness, helped to enforce conference legislation concerning clerical attire. When Stephen Timmons saw how meticulous Henry B. Bascom was in regard to his garments, he turned Bascom's horse into a large muddy field so that the young preacher would soil his clothes in securing the horse. While on the Augusta circuit in Virginia in the year 1835, Thomas O. Summers found that his double-breasted English looking suit destroyed his work with the older members. In 1848 John Mathews was sent to the Fayetteville station in Tennessee but, upon his arrival, he found that two laymen who had seen him at conference had already publicly criticised him, declaring "He won't do! His shirt collar is too wide." Lovick Pierce was told by a layman that if he did not look so much like a lawyer he could convert half the world.

When long trousers came into use, suspenders or "gal-luses" as they were called, became popular. Methodism, however, proclaimed them to be objects of pride. At a quarterly conference near Pittsburg it was decided that the members would use all their efforts "to put down the

ungodly practice of wearing suspenders." When Bishop Capers was a young itinerant he wore suspenders until a devout layman said to him: "O Brother Capers, how I love you! I love to hear you preach, I love to hear you meet class, I love you anyhow, but O' them galloweses! Won't you pull them off?"

"Pull them off, my brother, for what?" asked Capers.

"O," replied the layman, "they make you look so worldly; and I know you ain't worldly neither, but do pull them off."

It was thought sinful for a preacher to possess jewelry. A gold or silver watch chain was a sure sign that the minister had become worldly. Thomas O. Summers found many persons on the Augusta circuit who objected to his wearing silver rimmed spectacles. Some declared that Summers was proud. Others doubted that Summers really needed spectacles, suggesting that he was only pretending that he had read many books. Summers was told that if he had to wear spectacles he should at least get a pair with steel frames. In 1807 a layman in New Hampshire brought a charge against his preacher on the ground that he wore "silver knee-buckles."

The demand for simplicity and plainness of appearance applied even to the care of the preacher's hair. He was expected to brush it flat down on his head; to dress it in any other manner was a concession to pride. George F. Pierce, who had difficulties with John Collinsworth over the broadcloth coat, was also criticised by the latter because Pierce's hair stood up on the forehead. "George," said Collinsworth, "why do you wear your hair as you do? All the rest of the preachers wear theirs like Bishop Asbury, brushed down, and you brush yours up."



"But, Uncle Collinsworth," replied Pierce, "I have a cowlick; God made my hair to grow up, and I can't make it grow down."

The early Methodist preachers were expected to have smooth shaven faces. According to John Peate, there was a time in the Erie Conference when there was not one man "who wore a beard long or short." At the Erie Conference of 1860 one preacher prayed earnestly for the brethren who were "adopting Jewish customs." In 1860 considerable excitement arose in certain sections of Alabama because the preachers were turning out their beards. Some laymen declared that they would not allow a bearded man to enter the pulpit. In 1866 when Enoch M. Marvin was elected to the episcopacy, he was the first Southern Methodist bishop with a full beard. Even then there was enough opposition to cause the senior bishop to advise Marvin to have his face shaved. Marvin's reply however was, "They'll have to stand it, they elected me in my beard and they must endure me in my beard."

At the beginning of his episcopal labors, Bishop Asbury had worn a gown similar to that used by Anglican bishops. At the laying of the cornerstone of Cokesbury College, Asbury appeared "in a long silken gown with flowing bands." At Salisbury, North Carolina, Asbury preached in a "black gown, cassock and band." Jesse Lee, the preacher at Salisbury, became alarmed over the bishop's gown. He feared that it would hurt the Methodist cause among the poor people. Lee was so caustic in his criticism that Asbury shortly after abandoned this formal dress. He had also found by that time that there was no room in his saddle-bags for such unnecessary articles.

No account of the Methodist preacher's costume would be complete without mention of the "new suit for conference." A minister did not object to being ragged during the year, but he did desire a new suit for the annual meeting of the preachers. During the last quarter of the conference year, he made plans to secure a new outfit. He could always expect some help from the laymen, because even though they had given the preacher very little money, they wanted their leader to appear well with the other ministers. Even on the poorest circuits there were always some ladies who volunteered to furnish parts of the suit. One might offer some homespun cloth; another might agree to make the minister's coat, while yet another contributed the waistcoat or trousers. An outstanding illustration of the desperate effort on the part of the people to secure the preacher a new suit for conference occurred in 1845 on the Monitowoc circuit, Wisconsin. Some rowdies there who attempted to break up a Methodist meeting were captured and they were released by the laymen only when they promised to furnish the preacher with a full suit, plus socks, shoes, and gloves. As a result, according to the record, the preacher "came to conference as well dressed as the best."

Methodism was unable to maintain her early uniformity and simplicity of ministerial dress. Even though the conferences passed resolutions to stem the tide, by 1830 it was plainly a losing fight. The younger men who entered the itinerancy refused to abide by the old customs. Jones says, "Our young ministers soon quietly gave up the keel bottomed coat with its standing collar for the neat fitting frock coat." One layman insisted that even the chickens realized the change in the preachers' attire. He claimed

that in the early days the chickens hid themselves when they saw Methodist ministers approaching, but now the preachers dressed so much like lawyers that the chickens could not recognize them.

It amuses the modern Methodists to read about these curious episodes concerning the attempt to avoid superfluity of clerical dress. But to those devout Methodist leaders it was not a humorous matter; they truly believed that the preacher's clothing symbolized his spiritual condition. It would be unbecoming indeed for modern Methodists to smile unkindly at the eccentricities of pioneer circuit riders on this subject. It was the motive behind their acts and legislation that should be remembered.

### § 8. "EVEN DOWN TO OLD AGE"

Bishop Asbury was once asked by some of his preachers as to what they should do when they became old. According to Bishop Galloway, Asbury "comforted them with the sage reflection that not many of them would probably live to be old." Asbury was speaking the truth for in early Methodism many of the circuit riders died at their posts of duty. Disease caused by exposure to the elements took a large toll from the itinerant ranks.

The hour however did come for many Methodist ministers when they were unable because of age or infirmities to continue in the itinerancy; when they were no longer able to ride the circuits and to proclaim the great message of salvation. They then became superannuates.

The preachers dreaded the thought of superannuation. It meant first of all the separation from the work to which they had dedicated their lives. Every circuit rider

also knew that the superannuate list was the "starvation list." They also realized that a worn-out minister was a "more welcome guest in heaven than anywhere on earth." It is not surprising then that the circuit riders endeavored to defer the date of superannuation and that tears were shed when that day finally came. When Maxwell P. Gaddis, because of ill health was placed on the inactive roll for one year only, he was grieved. He wrote: "I wept like a child. I could not endure the idea of departing from the regular work, although my health was so much impaired; but my best friends all urged me to acquiesce in the matter, and comply with the wish of the conference to go and spend the winter at the south. To this arrangement I finally agreed with much reluctance."

Many of the preachers when they finally superannuated were unable to provide even the barest necessities of life for themselves and their dependents. Asbury's early helpers had literally taken no thought as to what they should eat or drink or wherewithal they should be clothed. Many of the pioneer circuit riders had experiences similar to William Burke who wrote thus in his journal: "This year, 1854, I closed my itinerancy, and sold my horse, bridle, saddle-bags, and saddle, and gathered up the fragments, and the fortune that I had made from twenty-six year's labor amounted to three hundred dollars." When Jesse Lee, the apostle of Methodism in New England, retired in 1809 he had saved only \$200. After fifty-two years in the itinerancy Philip Bruce had property which amounted to the small sum of \$300.

The Methodist Episcopal Church did not entirely forget the worn-out preachers; it tried to give them some financial assistance. At the Christmas Conference there

was placed in the Discipline this question: "How can we provide for superannuated preachers and the widows and orphans of preachers?" The answer in part was: "Let every traveling preacher contribute two dollars yearly to the conference. 2. Let every one when first admitted as a traveling preacher pay twenty shillings (Pennsylvania currency). 3. Let this money be lodged in the hands of the treasurers . . . 6. Out of this fund let provision be made for the worn-out preachers, and then for the widows and children of those that are dead." That was an excellent plan and it possessed great possibilities. An enormous amount of money would be available today for the superannuates if every Methodist minister since 1784 had contributed annually the sum of two dollars to a common fund. The members of the Christmas Conference were so optimistic over this scheme that they provided three treasurers, three clerks, and three inspectors to supervise the handling of the money. The Preachers Fund, as it was called, proved however of little value in relieving the wants of the needy preachers; a sufficient capital was never secured.

The next step toward a superannuate endowment came in 1796 when the General Conference created the Chartered Fund, the income from which was to be given to the aged ministers and the widows and orphans of ministers. It was to be supported by several different sources of income. The profits of the newly organized Book Concern as well as the proceeds of the Preachers Fund were to be given to the Chartered Fund. It was expected however that the larger amount of money would come from laymen and friends of Methodism. It was hoped that they would contribute liberally because of their love and

respect for the circuit riders. In pathetic language the General Conference begged for contributions to the Chartered Fund. The appeal stated: "Our brethren who have labored on the mountains, on the Western waters, and in the poorer circuits in general have suffered unspeakable hardships, merely for the want of some established fund, in which the competent members of our Society might safely lodge what their benevolent hearts would rejoice to give for the spread of the gospel. On the same account many of our worn-out preachers, some of whom would consume their strength by their great exertions for the salvation of souls, have been brought into deep distress; and the widows and orphans of our preachers have been sometimes reduced to extreme necessity who might have lived in comfort if the preachers who were the husbands on the one hand, and the fathers on the other, had not loved their Redeemer better than wife or children, or life itself."

The immediate response to the appeal of the General Conference for the support of the Chartered Fund was encouraging. Bangs says: "Many of our friends willingly subscribed to the valuable institution, and several thousand dollars were collected in a short time." Interest in this worthy project however soon waned. It too never solved the problem of superannuation. The income from this endowment was sufficient only to pay an average of \$90-100 a year to each of the annual conferences; and that meant only about two dollars a year to each conference claimant. In 1833 the superannuates were receiving less than two per cent of their allowances from the Chartered Fund.

It soon became evident that other sources of help must

be found for the superannuates. The General Conference of 1800 therefore called upon each circuit to take fifth Sunday collections, part of which was to be used for the worn-out preachers. The General Conference of 1812 asked the annual conferences to raise money in their own bounds in order to relieve the aged and needy ministers. As a result there came into existence conference organizations known as the Mite, the Preacher's Aid, and Mutual Assistance societies. Bishop Asbury as he traveled over his diocese actually begged funds for the needy superannuates.

None of the many attempts of the Church to aid the superannuates were successful. As a result there were only two alternatives for the circuit riders as they reached middle age. They either had to locate and engage in business pursuits, or else serve until feebleness and old age forced them to retire from the itinerancy and then suffer the privations incident to superannuation. Many voluntarily chose the latter way even though they had to endure economic hardships in the evening of life. It shall always be to the honor of those pioneer circuit riders that even in feebleness and old age they continued their noble attitude and exemplified that heroic spirit so characteristic of early American Methodism.

The superannuates were held in highest esteem by their conference brethren. They were given the best accommodations if they were able to attend the annual conferences. In some conferences the audience would stand when the secretary read the names of the superannuates. Their advice bore much weight on spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. If the aged ministers were unable because of illness, distance, or lack of funds to attend conference

they would send letters of greeting and exhortation which would be read in open session. Fraternal greetings were in turn sent by the conference to these absent members. The circuit riders would often give of their small income to assist their more needy aged brethren.

Death did not hold any sting for the superannuates. They exemplified that great statement of Wesley: "Our people die well." On their death beds they declared anew their faith in the message which they had proclaimed during their active ministry. They died with shouts of triumph on their lips. Edwin Ray of the Indiana Conference in his last moments said: "Tell my brethren in the ministry that the religion I have professed and preached to others, has comforted me in life, supported me in affliction, and now enables me to triumph in death." Jesse Lee as death rapidly approached shouted, "Glory, glory, Jesus reigns! Heaven is just before me." "All is well" was Bishop McKendree's benediction. Peter Doub's dying message was, "Tell the brethren at Conference to preach the same gospel."

"What preachers have died this year?" soon became a disciplinary question at each annual conference. There was scarcely a session held when badges of mourning were not worn in honor of departed members. The modern Methodists regret however that such short memoirs were written of those noble men. Caleb Pedicord and George Mair were the first names recorded in the conference journals in answer to the question, "Who have died this year?" The brief memoir of the former was: "Caleb Pedicord, a man of sorrows, and like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world, and much devoted to God." The obituary of Mair stated



only that he was "a man of afflictions, but of great patience and resignation; and of excellent understanding."

The pioneer Methodists apparently had no time to spend in mourning for deceased preachers. As Moore says: "The Church buried her dead heroes with hardly a stone to mark their resting place; made brief mention of their exit from this world on the minutes, and hastened to the field of conflict." In a similar strain Hedges has written of those early preachers, "Falling where they toiled, their graves are like the graves on the battle-field—a simple slab, with a name inscribed to tell who the sleeper is in the lonely spot. Or, if only wounded, they crept away to bear their glorious scars for a while, then 'earth to earth,' and the work went on, as the gaps were closed by those whom God thrust out to call sinners to repentance."

The superannuates of pioneer Methodism were truly the forgotten men. Hundreds of circuit riders who gladly gave their all that others might have the gospel preached to them, suffered privations in old age and were soon forgotten after they departed from the world. Yes, many of those heroes of the Cross often found the evening of their lives to be dark and dreary, but as Henry Smith has so beautifully written: "They have long since met, where they have no more rugged mountains and rapid streams to cross. They no longer press through the wilderness and sleep in the woods. They no longer endure heat and cold, hunger and thirst, sickness and pain; spending restless nights in a filthy cabin, on a dirt floor, after a long day's ride." Long ago they have heard from their Saviour:

“Servant of God, well done!  
 Thy glorious warfare’s past;  
 The battle’s fought, the race is won,  
 And thou art crowned at last.”

### § 9. AN UNPAID DEBT

“The whole country is under debt of gratitude to the Methodist circuit riders, the Methodist pioneer preachers whose movement westward kept pace with the movement of the frontier. . . .” In such manner President Roosevelt paid tribute to the itinerants of early Methodism. That great statesman did not fail to recognize the contributions of those humble men of God who, without the glamour of the military, played such a vital part in laying the religious, social, intellectual and economic foundations of the American nation.

The greatest contribution of the circuit riders was keeping religion alive on the frontier. They did not allow the pioneers of the West to forget God or permit them to continue in vice and sin. The preachers went into the most remote cabins in search of souls. There they would tell a lonely family about the Saviour, would pray with them, and ere long a family altar would be erected and family worship would take the place of atheistic discussions or superstitious fears. Thousands would never have heard the message of salvation had it not been for those brave men of God.

Not only did those early Methodist ministers carry the gospel to the pioneers, but they also inspired them to noble action. They gave courage to the frontiersmen in their stern fight with nature. The story of salvation injected hope into their lives. The Saviour became a com-

panion to the lonely men and women. As the preacher talked his listeners remembered better days. Their thoughts were raised above the commonplace. Ambitions of youth returned. The visit of a Methodist preacher was a benediction.

The Methodist itinerants with their message of universal salvation became the great champions of democracy. They denounced the Calvinistic doctrine which provided only for the salvation of the few elect. The Methodist leaders stressed the importance of the individual. Their message was that every man, whether he be rich or poor, white or colored, had the same status before God.

These men not only talked about democracy, but they also exemplified it in their own lives. They were no respectors of persons. The circuit riders went into the most humble homes and treated the poorest persons as their equals. They were criticised for working with the outcasts of society. Enemies called them "nigger preachers" because they labored with the poor whites and the colored folks. It was charged that only the lowly and insignificant people joined with the Methodists. Perhaps that was true, but Methodism by such a brotherly policy far surpassed the political leaders, the educators and social reformers of the early eighteenth century in leavening the nation with the germ of democracy.

The circuit riders were the propagators of patriotism and nationalism. The frontiersmen were hundreds and thousands of miles from Washington. They were so out of touch with national life that it was easy for them to lose sight of their patriotic duties. The Methodist preachers however would not allow the pioneers to forget their nation. As Bacon says: "With the theology of Saint Paul and Saint John went hand in hand the political prin-

ciples of Hamilton and Madison. The same men who carried the Bible into the wilderness carried the Federalist also." It was the circuit riders who told the people about their presidents, who brought the news of foreign affairs and domestic legislation.

Under the tutelage of the Methodist itinerants lawless men became patriotic citizens. Men trained under the Methodist discipline rose to positions of political prominence. It was Edward Tiffin, a local preacher, who became the governor of Ohio, and John McLean, a class leader, who served with distinction as a member of the United States Supreme Court. Methodism became so noted for its patriotic fervor that Daniel Webster in his famous Seventh of March speech in the United States Senate declared that he regarded the unity of the Methodist Episcopal Church not only as "one of the great props of religion and morals, throughout the whole country, from Maine to Georgia, but as almost essential to the unity and integrity of the nation."

The circuit riders were the educators of the West. They taught the people long before the coming of the schoolmaster and the little red school house. Newspapers being almost unknown on the frontier, the preachers were the news carriers. "They came," wrote one young man, "to us out of the great world, about which we knew so little and were so curious." They carried in their saddle bags books and tracts which they sold or gave to the people. Many a youth's ambition was fired by a book left by the minister. The monthly sermon was another educational feature. "'Goin' to meetin' at the call of the devoted itinerants," writes J. V. Watson, "has always been the beginning of wisdom and germ of civilization to the

denizens of the first cabins that thinly dotted the West." The preachers started Sunday schools where in addition to hearing the story of Jesus, the children actually learned to read and write. When Methodist colleges began to rise in the West it was the circuit riders who were the first presidents, teachers, and trustees of those institutions.

The Methodist itinerants contributed to the economic development of the nation. Their message lured men from their vices. Conversion brought sobriety and frugality in place of gambling, drinking and gay living. To the surprise of many, the poor insignificant Methodists began to accumulate wealth. Many rich Methodists today owe their fortune to unknown circuit riders who instilled into shiftless ancestors the Methodist doctrine of thrift and industry.

The Methodist preachers helped to maintain law and order. Their gospel message restrained passions. The Methodist Book of Discipline forbade fighting, quarreling and taking cases to court. Disputes among the brethren were settled by the Church. Men with feuds of long standing shook hands after they had knelt at the altar of a lowly Methodist church. It is not surprising that wherever Methodism went it reduced lawlessness. A Virginia judge once testified to the value of Methodism in his judicial district by saying, "How amazing the change wrought in this place! Before the Methodists came into these parts, when I was called by my office to attend court, there was nothing but drunkenness, cursing, swearing, and fighting most of the time the court sat; whereas now nothing is heard but praise and conversing about God and the things of God."

The Methodist preachers taught good manners to the frontiersmen. They were instructed by their Discipline to "everywhere recommend decency and cleanliness." Bishop Asbury continually exhorted the people to keep their cabins clean, because as he would say, "there is no religion in dirt, and filth and fleas." A strong hint from the circuit rider caused green pewter plates and dirty knives and forks to be cleaned. It shamed people for the preachers to find their homes in disorder. Watson tells of coming to a cabin late at night and finding everything in a rough condition. Upon waking the next morning he could scarcely believe his eyes, for "everything about the cabin partook of an air of increased neatness over the preceding evening—the yard had received a scavenger's service. The feet of deer, bones, and other fragments of a hunter's victory, were all removed to an appropriate distance." In such manner did the circuit riders raise the social scale of life.

Good manners were taught by example. Bishop Marvin, when an itinerant, once stayed in a cabin where, when he asked in the morning for a basin of water to wash his face, the host was amazed. After Marvin had bathed, the man said, "Mister, do you wash every morning?" And then as the native watched Marvin comb his hair, he asked, "Mister, do you comb your hair every morning?" When Marvin answered in the affirmative, the man replied, "Mister, what a sight of trouble you must be to yourself!" Nevertheless that same person after the departure of Marvin, started the habit of bathing his face and combing his hair.

The circuit riders brought the scattered people of the frontier in contact with each other. They furnished the

incentive for social and religious gatherings. They brought strangers together in class meetings, preaching services and in camp meetings. People thereby learned to know each other. They made new acquaintances. The preachers furnished these frontiersmen with a lofty theme of conversation. A public opinion was created which was based upon the ideas of the preachers.

After surveying the services of the Methodist itinerants it is not an exaggeration to say that the circuit riders kept culture alive in the out-of-the-way places of America. "The Methodist preacher with his saddle bags," once declared Stephen A. Douglas in the United States Senate," carried civilization through the West." In 1924 when a statue was erected in Washington in honor of Bishop Francis Asbury, Congress by a joint resolution donated the land. In doing so Congress declared that this gift was made because Asbury's "continuous journeys through our cities, towns, and villages and early settlements—greatly promoted the interest of patriotism, education, morality and religion and were a distinct aid to the American Republic." The same could be said of every Methodist preacher who rode a circuit.

A foreigner once visited a town in England which was so clean, so democratic, so religious and so prosperous that he was forced to ask, "What is the explanation of all this?" The answer was, "One hundred years ago there came into this town a man by the name of John Wesley." If that stranger's visit had been to the cabins that dotted the early American frontier, the answer to his question would have been, "A Methodist circuit rider came this way."

## CHAPTER V

### METHODIST POLITY

#### § 1. THE PIONEER EPISCOPACY



T the Christmas Conference of 1784 the American Methodists adopted the episcopal form of government. Two men, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, were elected at that time as the first superintendents or bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Christmas Conference clearly defined the duties of these men. They were to ordain the superintendents, elders, and deacons; to preside at the conferences of the preachers; to appoint the preachers to their fields of labor; to change, receive, and suspend the ministers when the conferences were not in session; to receive appeals from both the clergy and laity, and to travel at large among the people.

It would seem that the American Methodists were somewhat presumptuous in adopting episcopal government. The term bishop at that time still connoted to the average American citizen the wearing of special garments, a large income, an episcopal palace, and even political preferment. Because of the unpopularity of the word, "bishop," John Wesley had advised the American Methodists to use the name, "superintendent," for their chief executive officer. There is no doubt that the Methodist episcopacy would have failed had it adhered to the traditional Anglican type. It succeeded, however, because the pioneer bishops developed on American soil a different kind of episcopacy.

The pioneer Methodist bishops really "traveled at large among the people." The first Methodist Discipline



stated that if a bishop "ceases from traveling without the consent of the conference, he shall not thereafter exercise any ministerial function whatsoever in our church." When William McKendree was elevated to the episcopacy he resolved to visit every part of the Church because he felt that the preachers and people should be acquainted with their bishops. It was not unusual for a Methodist bishop to travel on horseback as many as five thousand miles annually. Asbury often visited during the year all the conferences in Methodism. This meant a trip from Maine to Georgia and across the Alleghany mountains to Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio.

There was a close fellowship between the bishops and ministers. Because early Methodism was small and since the bishops traveled continually, intimate contacts were possible. In 1787 there was one bishop to sixty-six preachers; in 1797 one bishop to one hundred and thirty-one ministers. Asbury at one time knew his circuit riders so intimately that he could name each one in his prayers. At the annual conferences the bishops listened patiently to long reports by the preachers. The bishops were accessible. Andrew Carroll writes thus of Bishop Morris: "Having in our head the august idea of the bishops of the English Establishment, we hardly knew how to feel easy in the presence of an American Methodist bishop; but a short time convinced us that Rev. T. A. Morris was as plain, as good-natured, and accessible as any man or minister we ever knew—"

The bishops associated with men of low estate. Asbury and McKendree spent the greater part of their episcopacy in the humble homes of the frontiersmen. Even Bishop

Coke with his English background showed this democratic spirit. In 1804 when he visited Providence, Rhode Island, he found that the citizens in order to honor a bishop had arranged for him to stay at a palatial mansion. Coke however declined the invitation, explaining that he wished to lodge wherever the circuit riders were entertained upon their visits to the city. When General Robert E. Lee was president of Washington College, at Lexington, Virginia, he invited Bishop Enoch M. Marvin to deliver a commencement address. At the conclusion of the program General Lee claimed Marvin as his guest, but the bishop excused himself by pointing out that he must now work among his own people. General Lee begged him to remain for dinner and meet the other distinguished visitors. Again Marvin declined, saying that he had promised "to break bread with Brother Senseny." Brother Senseny was the blacksmith of that small village.

The pioneer episcopacy was not a sinecure. Many were the hardships which the bishops bravely faced. They were often forced to sleep out in the open. Once while traveling over the Genesee Flats, Bishop Roberts lived for three days on wild strawberries. Bishop Paine, on an episcopal tour in Texas in 1849, ate in a cabin where he was given only an old pegging awl with which to eat a plate of peas. At times Bishop Asbury would complain in his journal. In 1803 he wrote: "But kindness will not make a crowded log cabin, twelve feet by ten, agreeable: without are cold and rain; and within, six adults, and as many children, one of which is all motion; the dogs, too, must sometimes be admitted."

For many years the salary of the bishops was the same as that of the circuit riders. They were also as likely not

to receive their salaries as were the preachers. In fact a systematic plan for securing the bishop's pay was not adopted until 1800. In that year the various annual conferences were ordered to pay their proportionate parts toward episcopal support. In 1816 Enoch George and Robert R. Roberts were elected as the first married bishops of the church, but until 1824 no additional financial assistance was given them except the usual disciplinary allowance for a minister's wife and family.

The early bishops were parsimonious in using the funds of the Church. They kept their traveling expenses at a minimum. Bishop Asbury often slept in an abandoned shack or out in the open, rather than spend the money of the Church for lodging at an inn. Bishop McKendree was so economical that in 1808 his expenses for food, traveling, and keeping of a horse was only \$51.63. Bishop Roberts, in order to live upon his small salary, moved his family into a house which was described as consisting of "rough log walls, clapboard roof and sleepers, and had neither chimney, door, windows, floor or loft, or furniture." When Bishop Whatcoat died his assets were not sufficient to pay the expenses of his funeral.

The pioneer bishops were expected to be great preachers. The laymen and preachers did not accept the view that administrative ability or scholarship constituted the qualifications of a bishop. Bishop Janes wrote that the people saw no good reason why he should not be constantly addressing public assemblies. Asbury claimed that the preachers thought it a sin if they did not have daily appointments for him. It was not unusual for the early bishops to average a sermon a day during their episcopacy.

A pioneer Methodist bishop attracted attention wher-

ever he went. He was considered the acme of the ministry. One historian writes that to the average layman the bishop was a calendar saint. People would travel miles to see a bishop. When Bishop Asbury visited Mechanicsburg, Ohio, in 1815, it is recorded: "All seemed to be anxious to see a bishop, and they pressed around him so closely that it was difficult to get him into the preachers' tent. After he was housed, the people crowded round the door by hundreds." Such a demonstration caused Asbury to remark to a friend, "You might as well have an elephant in your camp as to have me."

Regardless of the sacrificial spirit shown by the early bishops there were often charges of tyranny brought against them. Those devout circuit riders, like modern Methodist ministers, often resented what they considered to be autocratic episcopal action. When Bishop Soule overruled the wishes of Jacob Young at the Ohio Conference in 1834, Young left the conference floor. Later he wrote in his journal: "I left the Conference-room and took a walk in the grove, in order to let off the steam—for it had become pretty high by this time. As I walked slowly along, I continued thinking—Pope, Pope!" Simon P. Richardson, in commenting upon Bishop Waugh, who presided over the Georgia Conference in 1841 said, "He impressed me as lacking the refinement and culture that his office demanded. He was dogmatic, and seemed to want the Conference to feel that he was bishop." J. W. Fields entered in his sketch-book the following notation concerning Bishop Early, who was president of the East Texas Conference in 1861: "The bishop either from dotage or supposed ignorance or inability of the Conference, assumed to be the Conference—I always want to respect our Bishops; but they must also respect my rights & feelings."

The bishops furthermore did not overawe the circuit riders during the conference sessions. Especially did the preachers object to the attitude of Bishop Coke, who held to the Anglican viewpoint of the episcopacy. When Coke introduced a certain resolution at the General Conference of 1796, one of the members shouted: "Popery, Popery, Popery!" Coke was amazed and, looking at the preachers, exclaimed, "Do you think yourselves equal to me?" Nelson Reed arose and without recognizing Coke spoke to Bishop Asbury. "Yes, we do think ourselves equal to him, notwithstanding that he was educated at Oxford, and has been honored with the degree of Doctor of Laws; and more than that, we think ourselves equal to Dr. Coke's king." Asbury would sometimes show his opposition to speakers in the annual conferences by turning his back upon them. This rebuke, however, only caused men like Jesse Lee to be more determined in their views. It is interesting, however, to notice that such difficulties between the bishops and the preachers were settled before the close of the conference session, and it was the invariable custom of the conferences to give a vote of thanks to the bishops for their able, patient, and impartial manner of conducting the business.

Despite the occasional conflicts between the bishops and the ministers, the episcopacy grew more and more in favor. Some groups, however, withdrew from the mother Church because they declared the episcopal system to be undemocratic. These non-episcopal branches of Methodism, however, have never made any appreciable progress. The Methodist episcopacy justified itself partly because it is the most efficient form of church government, but more so because in the pioneer days of American Methodism the outstanding men were called to that office. So

satisfied were the early Methodists with their episcopacy that in 1808, when the constitution of the Church was made, it was decided that no future General Conference could "change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency."

## § 2. THE BISHOP'S MEN

At the Christmas Conference of 1784, because there were no ordained Methodist ministers in America, thirteen preachers, eleven of whom were present at the conference, were elected as elders and were thereby given the right of administering the sacraments of the Church. Then in order that the sacraments might be available for all the Methodist people, these men were instructed to administer the ordinances in the places where there were no ordained Methodist preachers. To accomplish this from two to eight circuits were assigned to each of the elders.

The presiding eldership of American Methodism evolved from the office of elder. Francis Asbury, during the first year of his episcopacy, found that it was impossible for a bishop to personally supervise all the work of the Church. He, therefore, turned to the elders for assistance. He began to assign special duties to them. In 1786 the elders were instructed to exercise within their own districts, during the absence of Asbury and Coke, all the executive power vested in the bishops.

The General Conference of 1792 approved these actions of Bishop Asbury. In that year the first section dealing with the "presiding elder" was placed in the Discipline. A distinction was made between the elder and the presid-

ing elder. The latter, according to the Discipline, was to be the bishop's representative in a certain defined area. He was to preside, during the absence of the bishops, at the quarterly conferences; was to enforce the laws of the Church upon both clergy and laity; was to keep the bishops informed of the work; and was to "attend the bishop when present in his district." In this manner there was created the presiding eldership, an office of such importance that it is impossible to understand American Methodism apart from it.

Four times a year the presiding elder met in quarterly conference with the officials of each circuit in his district. He made a minute inspection of the work. The class leaders, exhorters, stewards, local preachers, and circuit riders reported to the presiding elder as to their stewardship during the past three months. In this manner there was in all parts of American Methodism a quarterly examination of the affairs of the Church.

The presiding elder while on these quarterly visits served as the peacemaker of his district. If he found friction between the preachers and the laymen, he endeavored to remove it. He mediated between the factions in the Church. If charges were made against a brother the presiding elder investigated them. He listened to appeals from dissatisfied members. Early Methodism was fortunate in having an officer to whom ecclesiastical trouble could be referred.

The laymen looked forward with great anticipation to the visits of the presiding elder. His presence at quarterly conference attracted people. Hundreds and even thousands assembled to meet and hear him. In contrast with modern quarterly meetings, those early conferences lasted from Friday until Monday.

The public interest in the presiding elder was due mainly to the fact that he was considered, next to the bishop, the outstanding preacher and the chief defender of the faith. The laymen expected to hear great sermons from their presiding elder. George Peck declares that "if a presiding elder did not break down everything before him, he did not, in their estimation, magnify the office." Under the leadership of the presiding elder, a revival usually occurred at the quarterly conference. Conversions were normal events at those meetings. It is recorded of Henry Summers, the first presiding elder in Iowa, that "over one hundred conversions have been known to follow his preaching at a single quarterly meeting."

The presiding elder was the guide and counselor of the preachers in his district. He directed the circuit riders in their course of study and corrected their homiletical errors. He inspired the discouraged ministers. Methodism owes much to the presiding eldership for its care in training the inexperienced itinerants.

The presiding elders were instrumental in securing recruits for the Methodist ministry. They were constantly seeking young men of piety and talent to fill the ever increasing calls of the itinerancy. James Quinn found in the Muskingum district six young men whom he encouraged and prepared for admittance to the annual conference. He wrote: "With this lovely group of young men I spent many a pleasant or profitable hour; for, although I was not very competent or apt to teach, yet they were apt and more than willing to learn."

The bishop's representatives were the advance guard of the Church. They were ever attempting to broaden the



Methodist sphere of influence. They were the men who formed the new circuits. They led in the early missionary work of Methodism. They were the pioneers in the Sunday school movement. To them was intrusted the task of furnishing the circuits with Methodist literature.

The rapid growth of American Methodism brought another duty to the presiding elders. When the Church was small, Bishop Asbury, because he was personally acquainted with all the preachers, was able to make the appointments without asking the advice of anybody. In 1808, however, when William McKendree became bishop, he felt the need of advice in this important task. He turned, therefore, to the presiding elders, and as a result the "cabinet" of American Methodism came into existence. The presiding elders became so valuable in this capacity that even Bishop Asbury, late in life invited their opinions as to the appointments. In a letter of November 27, 1812, Asbury wrote: "I must repose great confidence in, and expect great help from the presiding elders. They must be my committee of information, council, and safety."

With so many important duties attached to the presiding eldership, it was, of course, a position which required the services of the strongest preacher. It was the accepted belief that only the best ministers could hold the office. William Green says that it was required in the pioneer days of American Methodism that a presiding elder "should be more than a medium man. The office was large and the man must correspond to the office. No refuse or worn-out man was selected; he must be social, able-bodied, religious, a good judge of men, and a good preacher."

The presiding elder of the early nineteenth century had to possess physical endurance because he was obliged to travel large districts. In 1800 William McKendree was assigned to a district that included Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and part of what is now West Virginia. In 1804 Joshua Soule was appointed to the Maine district which was twelve hundred miles in circumference. At one time all of North Carolina except a few circuits made up a single district. Regardless, however, of the size of his district, the presiding elder was expected to make four annual visits to all the circuits.

The presiding elders were often called the "bishop's men" and sometimes the "bishop's pets." This resulted from the fact that they were appointed by the bishop and were responsible to him. Many of the preachers felt that this practice was undemocratic. They began to argue that the presiding elders should be elected by the annual conferences. Here was started an issue that has lived to the present time. One historian has written: "For nearly a hundred years the mode of selecting and appointing the sub-bishop has been under warm discussion, and much ink has been shed, much paper wasted, and occasionally some bad blood stirred up."

The advocates of an elective presiding eldership argued not only that it was not democratic or American to have a superior ecclesiastical officer who was appointed in an arbitrary manner, but also that as long as the bishop selected his lieutenants they would be amenable to him and not to the preachers. It was further contended that the members of the annual conferences could choose the presiding elders more wisely than could the bishops. The reply to such arguments was that appointments by the bishops prevented petty electioneering; that if the

presiding elders were chosen by their fellow preachers they would hesitate to enforce the discipline; and that the bishops would not be influenced in making their choice by friendship or local opinion as the preachers might be.

At every General Conference from 1792 to 1820 the method of choosing the presiding elders was an important topic of discussion. By 1820, however, the sentiment was so much in favor of an elective office that the General Conference of that year, by a vote of sixty-one to twenty-five decided that the bishop should nominate at the annual conference three times as many men as were needed to fill the vacancies in the presiding eldership; that the members of the conference should select from this number their superior officers; that these men, when chosen, were to be an advisory council to the bishop in stationing the preachers.

It would seem that such a decisive vote would have settled this long debated issue, but it did not. Joshua Soule, bishop-elect, refused to be consecrated if that law was to be enforced. He insisted that an elective presiding eldership was unconstitutional since the fundamental law of the Church instructed the bishops "to oversee the business of the church." This function, Soule asserted was impossible, if the presiding elders, the agents of the bishops, should be amenable to the annual conferences and not to the episcopacy. Soule was supported in his contention by Bishop McKendree. So pertinent were their arguments that the delegates resolved to suspend the resolution for four years. By the time of the next General Conference the church had approved the stand of Soule and McKendree. The appointive presiding eldership has remained in episcopal Methodism to this day.

The attitude of the laymen to the sub-episcopate must not be overlooked. Some of them, like their modern successors, claimed that the presiding eldership was an unnecessary expense to the Church. The following speech delivered by a disgruntled layman at a quarterly conference expressed the sentiments of perhaps many an early Methodist: "We've got to pay our elders for preachin' one or two sarmons at our quarterly meetings, and generally not much of sarmons at that, and then we've got to be ruled over by them in a way that's not pleasant, and can't have our way in anything. I see no use in this sort of thing, and I don't believe it's Scriptur' or just; and, for my part, I won't stand it much longer."

The early presiding elders made an office, not considered necessary when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, the second important executive position in Methodism. The modern presiding elders have the same opportunity of magnifying that office. The future of the sub-episcopacy will be determined by the type of men appointed to it.

### § 3. "GOING TO CONFERENCE"

Annual Conference toward which the circuit riders looked with so much anticipation was an early Methodist institution. It started in June, 1744, when John Wesley called ten of his preachers to London to discuss the work of the Methodist societies. The meeting was so profitable that after that date Wesley held annually a conference with his itinerants. When the first missionaries came to America, they continued the custom. After the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, Bishop Asbury, as he

traveled over his diocese held annual meetings with his preachers so that he might survey the progress of the Church and make the appointments for the next year. In 1796 the Church was divided into six conferences and names were assigned to each. The term "annual conference" came to mean both a geographical division of American Methodism and an annual assemblage of all the traveling preachers in that section.

It was considered a great distinction to entertain an early Methodist annual conference. The Methodist folk desired the meeting especially because of the impetus which such a gathering gave to Methodism in any locality. The Mississippi Annual Conference of 1845 asserted that "nothing is better to do in removing prejudice, than the presence for a week of an Annual Conference with its bishops and array of the most talented and powerful preachers in the land." In 1810 the New England Annual Conference met at Winchester, New Hampshire. There was but one Methodist family in that town, but the head of that family, desiring to advertise Methodism to his neighbors, paid all the expenses of the conference. The citizens of Raleigh, North Carolina, were so anxious to have the Virginia Annual Conference of 1811 that they pledged themselves to provide the entertainment of the preachers and the rations for the horses.

Because of the lack of church buildings the early annual conferences met in private houses, in tents, and in barns. The first annual conference after the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized was held in the home of Green Hill, near Louisburg, North Carolina. Bishop Coke in describing that meeting says: "There were about twenty preachers, or more in one house, and by laying beds on

the floors there was room for all." The South Carolina Annual Conference of 1794 "was much straitened for room, having one chamber twelve feet square to confer in, sleep in, and for the accommodation of the sick." The Rock River Annual Conference of 1840 met in a tent with the ground covered with straw. As the speakers arose, Bishop Waugh recognized them by saying: "The brother has the straw." The first Genesee Annual Conference was held in a barn.

The circuit riders were not interested in the nature of the entertainment offered at conference. They were so happy to have the privilege of meeting with their brethren whom they had not seen for a year that all other matters seemed trivial. The opening conference hymn, Charles Wesley's great poem, "And Are We Yet Alive?" well expressed their sentiments. Tears of joy mingled with those of sadness came to the eyes of the itinerants as they sang these stanzas:

"And are we yet alive,  
 And see each other's face?  
 Glory and praise to Jesus give,  
 For his redeeming grace.

\* \* \* \* \*

What troubles have we seen,  
 What conflicts have we passed,  
 Fightings without, and fears within,  
 Since we assembled last!

But out of all the Lord  
 Hath brought us by his love;  
 And still he doth his help afford,  
 And hides our life above."

True brotherhood prevailed at those annual gatherings. After a conference held in New York in 1791, Bishop Asbury entered in his journal: "We had about thirty preachers at this conference, and not a frown, a sign of sour temper, or an unkind word was seen or heard amongst us." James B. Finley wrote: "When the preachers met from their different and distant fields of labor, they had a feast of love and friendship; and when they parted they wept and embraced each other as brothers beloved." They wore badges of mourning for those who had fallen during the past year.

Only a small number of items of business were transacted at those early annual conferences. It was not until many years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church that any considerable time was spent at conference on education, missions, Sunday schools, and similar matters that are so prominent in modern Methodist conferences. The early statistical reports consisted mainly of the record of numerical growth. A special committee handled all matters relating to financial appropriations for the needy preachers. The important work of the business sessions was the admitting of candidates on trial, the election of deacons and elders, the examination of the character of the preachers, and the appointment of the ministers to their circuits. Sometimes this business was completed in one day.

Why then did the annual conferences remain in session for an entire week? The answer is simple. In those early meetings major stress was placed on religious services. One of the first acts of a conference was to appoint a committee to arrange for the daily religious exercises. In 1803 the New England Annual Conference had

preaching services at five A. M., eleven A. M., and in the evening. Laughter was tabooed at those annual gatherings. Bishop Hamline was so opposed to any mirth at conference that whenever any matter caused the preachers to smile or laugh, he would at once call them to prayer, asking the brother who had laughed the heartiest to lead in the devotions.

Prayer was an outstanding characteristic of early annual conferences. The first Discipline had this question: "How may we best improve the time of our conferences?" The answer was: "1. While we are conversing, let us have an especial care to set God always before us. 2. In the intermediate hours, let us redeem all the time we can for private exercises. 3. Therein let us give ourselves to prayer for one another, and for a blessing on our labour." Prayer services at sunrise and late at night were considered indispensable parts of an annual conference.

With the emphasis upon spiritual activities, it is not surprising that the conferences ended in revivals; that hundreds were converted; and that the preachers went to their new posts renewed in spiritual vigor. Camp meetings were often held in connection with those yearly assemblies. At the Western Annual Conference of 1803 held at Cynthiana, Kentucky, Bishop Asbury preached on Sunday to nearly ten thousand listeners. At the Philadelphia Annual Conference of 1800 about one hundred and fifty persons were converted. Henry Boehm says of the latter event: "Meetings were held day and night with rarely any intermission. One meeting in the church continued forty-five hours without cessation."

The examination of the character of the preachers consumed a large amount of the time at the annual confer-



ences. "Nothing against him," the formal answer of the modern presiding elder, did not suffice in pioneer Methodism. To keep the clerical ranks free of the immoral and the inefficient, Methodism put all the preachers through a severe examination. The Church could thus boast that when a minister was sent to a circuit, he had the endorsement of the annual conference. The character of the applicants for admission on trial and of those who desired to be ordained deacon or elder were given special scrutiny. Hence it is not to be wondered at that the business sessions of the annual conferences were held behind closed doors. It was thought imprudent to have spectators when the examination of the official and moral character of each preacher was taking place.

A study of the journals of the early conferences shows that Methodism considered many things unbecoming to a Methodist minister. William Winans was reproved by the Western Annual Conference of 1809 because of "his making proposals of marriage to the Sisters & his general familiarity with the fair." James Mellard was censured at the South Carolina Annual Conference of 1806 for his "too long preaching, praying &c., and speaking too fast." The New England Annual Conference of 1803 objected to Joshua Taylor because "he has not enemies enough," while the Ohio Annual Conference of 1818 refused to admit Alfred Brunson because he was "proud, self-conceited, and assumed more confidence in the pulpit than the bishop does." At the Baltimore Annual Conference of 1814 the bishop admonished one brother because "he was too much addicted to the relating of unprofitable anecdotes in private circles and families."

Modern Methodist preachers might resent such criti-

cisms and censures, but such was not the case in the day of Bishop Asbury. James Jenkins, a pioneer itinerant says: "We generally had good conferences, and notwithstanding we told each other our faults without any previous notice, it was usually taken in good part." Rules, however, were adopted to protect the preachers from unjust or unfounded criticisms. The Illinois Annual Conference in 1827 ruled that no member should prefer a complaint against a brother, unless he had first spoken to him on the subject.

As the final act of the annual conference the bishop read the appointments for the next year. This was also the most touching scene of the week. The preachers in order to leave immediately after the announcement of the appointments had their horses saddled and waiting. Before the bishop arose to make the important announcement, the circuit riders sang their parting conference hymn, the first and last stanzas of which were:

"And let our bodies part,  
 To different climes repair;  
 Inseparably joined in heart  
 The friends of Jesus are.  
 \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Where all our toils are o'er,  
 Our sufferings and our pain!  
 Who meet on that eternal shore  
 Shall never part again."

At the close of the hymn most of the preachers were in tears. The bishop with trembling lips would talk to them in this manner: "I have done the best I could for you. Some of you may be disappointed, but go to your

work like faithful servants of God, and he will take care of you. Some of you may fall this year, but fall at your posts; and remember the crown follows martyrdom." Then in profound silence the bishop read the appointments. One hour later, farewells had been said and those noble itinerants were on their way to new fields of labor.

#### § 4. THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

The Christmas Conference adjourned without making provision for the calling of another general meeting of the Methodist preachers. This oversight on the part of the members of that conference proved to be a serious mistake, for many costly experiments in polity were made by the pioneer Methodists before the "General Conference" became the highest legislative body in American Methodism.

The Methodist Episcopal Church after 1784 was governed theoretically by the preachers but it was almost impossible because of distance, expense and other factors for all of them to meet together. Bishop Asbury therefore adopted the policy of holding a number of conferences each year so that he might meet annually with all the preachers. In 1785 he held three such meetings, the first at Louisburg, North Carolina, the second in Brunswick county, Virginia, and the third at Baltimore, Maryland. These conferences as McTyeire says, "were considered as adjourned meetings of the undivided ministry." No legislative act of one group of ministers was official until it had been approved by all the other annual conferences. At the close of the year, the minutes of the various conferences were published in a form as if there had been but one meeting of the preachers.

The Methodist Episcopal Church could not function efficiently under such a method of legislation. It was almost impossible to revise, modify, or make additions to the Discipline when unanimous consent was required of all the annual conferences. The plan also tended to divide the Church. Some leaders feared that it would be impossible to preserve unity in the Methodist Episcopal Church unless a general legislative assembly could be held which would represent all geographical sections of American Methodism.

Bishop Asbury, however, believed that the legislative tangle could be solved and the unity of Methodism preserved by the organization of a Council which would serve as an advisory body to the annual conferences. The Council after making a study of the problems before the Church was to recommend certain legislation to the conferences. The Council was to be composed of the bishops and the presiding elders, thereby assuring representation to all parts of the Church. The preachers in 1789 agreed to adopt Asbury's plan, although many of them felt that it gave the bishops too much control over ecclesiastical legislation.

The Council lasted only two years. Although according to the minutes, the members of the Council were given "authority to mature everything they shall judge expedient," yet by restrictive clauses in its charter the Council was powerless from the beginning. The unanimous consent of the Council had to be secured before a resolution could be sent to the conferences. One obstinate presiding elder could block any proposed action of the Council. Another hindrance was the fact that "nothing assented to by the Council could be binding in any district till it had been agreed upon by a majority of the

conference which is held for that district." Such an arrangement only tended to greater disunity for as Jesse Lee said, "If one district should agree to any important point, and another district should reject it, the union between the two districts would be broken, and in process of time our United Societies would be thrown into discord and confusion."

Bishop Asbury soon realized that the Council was very unpopular. As he visited the annual conferences during the year 1790 he encountered much hostility to this body. After holding the conference in Virginia in 1790 Asbury wrote in his journal: "Our conference began; all was peace until the Council was mentioned." He also discovered that some of the preachers in Maryland and Delaware had "felt the Virginia fire about the question of the Council." Asbury finally was forced to recognize that the Council was doomed. As Sherman says, "The Council had become so odious to preachers and people that Asbury himself requested that it might be named no more."

After the failure of the Council the Church reverted to the legislative plan used when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, namely, an assembly of all the traveling preachers. Bishop Coke, Jesse Lee, and James O'Kelly, rather than Bishop Asbury were the leaders in the movement for a General Conference. Bishop Asbury would have preferred some other method, but he was willing to agree upon any program that would insure unity to the Church. He wrote in his journal: "I felt perfectly calm, and acceded to the General Conference for the sake of peace." As a result, a conference of all the preachers was held at Baltimore in November, 1792. It was the first

mass meeting of the ministers since the Christmas Conference in 1784.

The circuit riders that met in Baltimore in 1792 decided that a General Conference of all the traveling preachers in full connection should be held every four years. The legislative power which had been held by the annual conferences was now vested in this quadrennial assembly. It was agreed that this body by a two-thirds vote could make new ecclesiastical rules, while only a majority vote was required to alter or amend old regulations.

Five mass meetings of the preachers were held but with each quadrennium this legislative plan became more unsatisfactory. Since a bare majority vote could alter or amend any rule of the Church, some persons feared that the preachers might under the influence of demagogues make radical changes in the Methodist program. Many of the leaders felt, as Bishop Hoss once expressed it, that "the stability of the church and its institutions could not wisely be allowed to depend on the varying judgment of a mere popular assembly."

There was another objection to the quadrennial meetings. They were not representative of the Church. Since the General Conferences were always held at Baltimore, only a small number of the ministers on the frontier were able to attend. The result was that legislation was controlled by the older conferences near Baltimore. For example, at the General Conference of 1804 there were present one hundred and eight preachers. Of that number sixty-seven or almost two-thirds of the entire body came from the Baltimore and the Philadelphia Annual Conferences. Only seven preachers from New Eng-

land and eleven from west of the Alleghany Mountains attended the General Conference of 1808. If a frontier circuit rider went to a General Conference it meant that he would be absent from his work from two to three months.

Although agitation for a delegated General Conference as a substitute for the mass meeting of the preachers began immediately after 1792, yet it was not until the General Conference of 1808 that any action was secured. At that meeting the preachers from the New York Annual Conference presented a memorial demanding a delegated General Conference based on the principle of proportionate representation to each annual conference. This, the memorial declared, "would be more conducive to the prosperity and general unity of the whole body, than the present indefinite and numerous body of ministers, collected together unequally from the various conferences, to the great inconvenience of the ministry and injury of the work of God." Upon the presentation of this memorial, a committee composed of two preachers from each conference, was appointed "to draw up such regulations as they may think best, to regulate the General Conferences, and report the same to this conference." Many of the outstanding leaders of American Methodism were placed on that committee but it remained for Joshua Soule, an almost unknown member of that conference to devise a workable legislative scheme for the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Joshua Soule, the father of the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was born of non-Methodist parents at Bristol, Maine, in 1781. At the age of seventeen he was licensed to preach and in 1804 when only

twenty-three years old he was made presiding elder of the Maine district. When Soule went to the General Conference of 1808 he had not yet reached his twenty-seventh birthday and he had never before attended a General Conference.

At its first meeting, the committee appointed to prepare a plan for regulating the General Conferences, decided that a sub-committee should draft the report. Joshua Soule, Ezekiel Cooper, and Philip Bruce were named as the members of the sub-committee. It was then agreed among the three that each should prepare a tentative plan. Soule's draft which provided for a delegated General Conference was accepted by the sub-committee and with only slight modifications it was approved by the large committee and reported to the General Conference.

On the conference floor, Soule, in face of strong opposition, defended his proposal for a delegated General Conference. As Armstrong has said, Soule "carried it through the committee against the opposition of Ezekiel Cooper, the philosopher and logician of the church, and through the General Conference itself against the opposition of Jesse Lee, one of the mightiest among the mighty." For eleven days Soule in a manner that won for him the respect of his opponents, carried point after point of his plan. The General Conference with only a few minor changes adopted Soule's original draft as the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Soule's plan provided for a delegated General Conference which would meet every four years. Each annual conference could send to it one delegate for every five members who were in full connection and who had traveled four years from the time they had been received on



trial. The bishops were to be the presiding officers of the General Conferences.

A delegated General Conference was only one part of Soule's contribution. Soule was not willing that the General Conference should be given final authority on all ecclesiastical matters and therefore he placed six limitations on its legislative power. These restrictive rules with slight modifications have lasted to the present time and have proved their value by preventing radical moves on the part of any General Conference. The restrictive regulations as adopted by the General Conference of 1808 are as follows:

"1. The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.

2. They shall not allow of more than one representative for every five members of the Annual Conference, nor allow of a less number than one for every seven.

3. They shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency.

4. They shall not revoke or change the general rules of the United Societies.

5. They shall not do away the privileges of our ministers or preachers of trial by committee and of an appeal. Neither shall they do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society or by a committee and of an appeal.

6. They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern nor the chartered fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumer-

ary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children."

It is interesting to note that after all the various attempts of the Methodist Episcopal Church to find some efficient and equitable method of legislation that it remained for a young man still in his twenties to show the way. Soule did his work so well that there has been no inclination on the part of the Church to return to the early legislative practices or to devise new schemes of ecclesiastical law making. Fifty-one General Conferences have been held by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, since Soule drafted his plan. "It can be safely said," writes Bishop DuBose, "that no Methodist in the world ever erected so great a single monument to his memory as the constitution has proved to the memory of Joshua Soule."

## § 5. THE ITINERANCY

The itinerancy, that is the frequent change of preachers at regular intervals, was a unique characteristic of pioneer Methodism. It was adopted by John Wesley partly because most of his lay preachers were untrained men. Wesley feared that if they remained long at any one place they would exhaust their message. Wesley further claimed that there was a diversity of ministerial qualities. "Nor can I believe," stated Wesley, "it was ever the will of our Lord that any congregation should have one teacher only. This preacher has one talent, that another. No one whom I ever knew has all the talents which are needful for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in a whole congregation." Even if his preachers had been university graduates, Wesley would have adopted the

itinerant system. When in 1785 Wesley heard that some Methodist ministers in America desired longer pastorates, he wrote: "Indeed, this is quite contrary to the whole economy of Methodism; God has always wrought among us by a constant change of preachers."

Under the leadership of Francis Asbury, Wesley's itinerant plan was continued in America. This was not obtained however, without some struggle. Shortly after Asbury arrived in America he wrote in his journal: "My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I think I shall show them the way." Asbury feared that a stationary ministry would cause the frontier sections to be neglected and would bring a distinction between urban and rural preachers. "Circulation" became Asbury's watchword. The fact that Methodist ministers became known as "traveling preachers" shows that Bishop Asbury's program was successful.

Three things are necessary for the administration of the Methodist itinerancy. They are first, a responsible authority to appoint the preachers to their respective circuits or stations; second, ministers willing to allow others to choose for them their fields of labor; and third, laymen who will forego the privilege of selecting their pastors. Pioneer American Methodism possessed these qualifications. After the Christmas Conference the power of appointment was vested in the episcopacy. The circuit riders accepted the decisions of the bishops, while the laymen, knowing that the character of every Methodist preacher had been approved at the annual conferences, gladly received the ministers that were sent to them.

Although it has been popular for the opponents of Methodism to attack the tyrannical power of the early

bishops, yet the records show that the episcopacy always gave careful consideration to the rights and needs of each individual preacher. The autocratic authority vested in the bishops was wielded with the most sincere motives and in a true Christian spirit. Although Asbury's maxim regarding the itinerancy was, "we wish men to labor where we say, and not where they may choose," nevertheless at conference he often announced: "Brethren, if any of you have anything peculiar in your circumstances that should be known to the Superintendent, in making your appointment, if you will drop me a note, I will, as far as will be compatible with the great interests of the Church, endeavour to accomodate you." Henry Boehm, the traveling companion for many years of Bishop Asbury, says that the bishop was always watchful of the health of the itinerants. Boehm quotes Asbury as frequently remarking to him: "Henry, Brother A. or B. has been too long in the rice plantations or on the peninsula; he looks pale; health begins to decline; he must go to the highlands."

The bishops that followed Asbury showed even more consideration in placing the preachers. In 1808 Bishop McKendree started the policy of asking the advice of the presiding elders concerning appointments. Bishop Janes was especially conscientious in selecting the fields of labor for the ministers. He insisted that no appointment was good enough as long as it might be made better. During conference Janes met night after night with the presiding elders. Often he was forced to say to his weary helpers, "Never mind your sleep; you can lose that better than this brother can endure a mistake for a year longer."

A noble and unselfish spirit was shown by the preachers toward their appointments. Henry Smith says that at

the early conferences, "Our business was done in peace; for there was no jealousy among our little band of brothers. No scrambling for the best circuits; (we had no stations;) if we got a bad circuit (as circuits are sometimes called,) we went to it with a willing mind, determined, if possible, to make it better: if we got a good circuit, we went with a cheerful heart, resolved to show ourselves worthy of a good place." The ministers willingly placed their ecclesiastical destinies in the hands of the bishops because they actually felt that the appointments were of God. It was the proud boast of many preachers that they had never once asked for an easy field of labor. More often the circuit riders begged to be sent to the most difficult places. Fellows writes that in the pioneer period of the Upper Iowa Conference, "the man most in honor among his brethren was the one that traveled the hardest circuit." Martin Ruter, the first American Methodist preacher to be given an honorary degree once said: "I ask no accomodation; the poorest circuit in the conference deserves a better minister than I am."

The Methodist laymen received their new preachers as "God's Men—Heaven appointed." That did not mean, however, that laymen never petitioned the bishops. This was often done. In comparison with modern times, however, there was this difference: the laymen usually did not ask for any special individual, but for a man who could save souls and who would build up Zion. The petitions were often worded in unique language. One committee asked the bishop for a "man to stir them up with a long pole; yes, send us a snorter." In 1878 there were 10,300 preachers stationed in the Methodist Episcopal

Church and not a single congregation refused to accept its minister.

Wesley's original plan of the itinerancy embodied the exchange of preachers every six or eight weeks. In American Methodism, however, the tenure was never less than three to six months. Since the Christmas Conference took no action regarding a time limit this matter was left to the discretion of the bishops, who started the practice of allowing a minister to remain on a circuit only one year. In 1804 only twenty seven Methodist preachers were serving a second successive term on the same work.

In 1804 an official time limit was adopted for the Methodist itinerancy. In that year the General Conference decided that no minister could remain at any one place for more than two years in succession. Concerning this legislation Aaron Hunt writes: "Soon after the commencement of the present century, two or three cases occurred that gave the bishop great annoyance. Some preachers, finding themselves in pleasant stations, and by the aid of self-constituted committees—believing of course, that they could do better in the place than any one else—objected to removal, while the more pious part of the society would have preferred a change; but the officious committee prevailed." Bishop Asbury favored the new law for it gave him a legal reason for refusing to re-appoint a preacher for a third year on the same circuit.

Although by the action of 1804 the ministers could remain two years at the same work, yet only a small number of them did so. The one year tenure had become so customary that when the circuit rider left for conference he took with him all his belongings, and gave a final farewell to his members. Indeed, the minister who was sent to the same circuit for a second year lost standing with

his brethren. It was said of him that he had only half done his work during the previous year and must be given another chance to complete it.

The Methodist itinerancy meant not only frequent changes but also long moves for the preachers. The transfer of circuit riders to distant conferences was common in early American Methodism. Hope Hull's first appointment was to the Salisbury circuit in North Carolina. The following year he was sent to the Pedee circuit in South Carolina, his third move was to the Amelia circuit in Virginia, while his fourth appointment was to Washington, Georgia. A few years later he was preaching in New England. In 1808 Isaac Lindsey was appointed to the French Broad circuit in East Tennessee. In 1809 he was sent to the Cold Water circuit which was north of St. Louis. That was certainly itinerancy with a vengeance.

The itinerancy made many contributions to pioneer American Methodism. It promoted a spirit of religious earnestness. The circuit rider had to work quickly because he had only a short time in any one place. A "now" ministry was produced. "Now" was the time for all religious activities; there could be no postponement until a second, third or fourth year. Stagnation of the people or the preacher was rendered almost impossible by the itinerancy.

The itinerancy also kept every circuit continually supplied with a preacher. A pulpit made vacant by death or resignation was filled immediately. No friction arose over the change of pastors. The preachers did not waste precious moments candidating for a church. The Methodists could boast that their whole field of labor was cultivated and that all their spiritual leaders were constantly at work. In 1857 when all the Methodist churches

were supplied with ministers, 21% of the Congregational churches had no preachers, 25% were filled by the supplies, and only 41% had regular pastors.

Many other advantages resulted from this frequent change of preachers. A few churches could not monopolize the services of the best ministers. Men were assigned to the places best fitted to their qualifications. The tenure of office was so short that neither the laymen nor the circuit rider could tire of each other. If an unwise appointment was made, the laymen were willing to temporarily endure the mistake knowing that they would be given a new preacher at the end of the year. The minister, likewise, did not become discouraged since he too realized that he would be sent to another field at the next conference. The constant change of preachers tended to block heresy, for the minister did not remain long enough in any location to surround himself with a group of heretics.

The most serious and perhaps the most proper charge made against the itinerancy was that it worked hardship upon the preacher and his family; that it deprived them of the normal pleasures incident to a stationary life. Such arguments, however, did not carry much weight when American Methodism was in its heroic era; when the cause of the Kingdom was more important than the welfare of the worker. Bishop Marvin in the following manner once answered the opponents of the itinerancy: "You say this operates great hardship on the preachers and their families. Be it so. No great work has ever yet been done in the world without hardship. - When the spirit of self-sacrifice shall be lost in the conferences our work will be done, and nothing will be left of Methodism but the name."



## CHAPTER VI

# METHODIST WORSHIP

### § 1. METHODIST BTHELS



THE future of American Methodism would have appeared very dark if it had been judged by the number of church buildings which it possessed during the period, 1784-1830. In the language of Alfred Brunson, church edifices in pioneer Methodism "were like angels' visits, few and far between." In 1801 Charles Giles wrote that a "Methodist church was a strange thing—a wonder in the land." It is interesting to know that the anti-Methodists pointed to the scarcity of Methodist houses of worship as one reason why the Wesleyan movement would fail in America.

The absence of consecrated edifices did not, however, prevent the early Methodists from having their Bethels. Like Jacob of old they erected their rude altars in strange places. For example, the log cabins that dotted the American frontier served as the first churches of Methodism. The pioneer circuit rider would visit from cabin to cabin until he found a family that welcomed religious services. That home then became the preaching place for the surrounding neighborhood. The first itinerants rarely ever preached in a church. As late as 1825 only two of the twenty-three preaching appointments for the Muskingum circuit were in church buildings.

The pioneer Methodists held their divine services in places even more unusual than a log cabin. In pleasant weather they worshipped under the giant trees or in brush arbors. Barns often served as Methodist temples. When

the school houses came to the frontier the Methodists used them as meeting houses. The first Methodist sermons in New Albany and Rising Sun, Indiana, were delivered in bar-rooms. When the Methodists entered Dubuque, Iowa, the only place available for preaching services was "a small inconvenient room over a grocery, the entrance to which was by a rickety stairs outside. While the few above were engaged in singing, praying, and speaking to one another of the good things of God to them, those in the grocery below were drinking, cursing, quarreling, and fighting."

The Methodists were not content, however, to worship in such odd places. They longed to have consecrated buildings. The circuit riders were the leaders in this building program. The Log Meeting-House on Sam's Creek, the first Methodist church edifice in America, was built by Robert Strawbridge, the pioneer itinerant of America. Glezen Fillmore, single handed, erected in 1818 the first Methodist church in Buffalo, New York. He had as he related "no trustees, no time to make them, and nothing to make them of." When James Axley was laboring in the Louisiana Territory he was unable to find a permanent preaching place. He decided therefore in 1807 to erect a Methodist church. With his own hands he cut down trees, hewed them into shape, made the shingles for the roof, built the pulpit, and cut the doors and windows for a house of worship.

Under the leadership of the preachers the laymen became interested in the erection of churches. Many chapels today bear the name of laymen who contributed the plot of ground for a house of worship. The early Methodists were poor but they gave their labor freely. Such

materials and merchandise as they had they offered to the Church. In 1811 when the first Methodist church was built in Dayton, Ohio, only \$78 of the \$451.05 subscribed was in cash. One individual was allowed four dollars for "spinning wheel and sundries." The only money expended in building the Methodist church at Truro, Massachusetts in 1793, was eight dollars for nails. The subscription list for the Methodist church in St. Clair, Michigan, had these two items: "Laura Graham, \$1.25 in sewing. Lucretia Peer, \$1.25 in short stockings. Paid."

On account of the haphazard method of building the first Methodist churches poor choices were often made in selecting sites. Edifices were usually built in obscure places; remote from the centers of population. The circuit system of course was largely responsible for this. The first houses of worship served the rural people, but they did not attract the people of the villages. When the Methodists in Detroit, Michigan, were offered a building site, they foolishly chose one entirely outside of the city. Bishop Asbury before his death complained of the poor statesmanship which was shown in the erection of the early churches. He said: "Some benevolent man would give us a site, the ground being so poor you could not raise mullein stalks on it, and we would thank him and erect a house upon it, where the people would be sure not to find it." Asbury also stated: "I tell you what it is; if we wish to catch fish, we must go where they are, or where they are likely to come. We had better pay money for a site in a central position in a city, town or village, than have them give us half a dozen lots for nothing in some by-street or lane."

Legal steps had to be taken to protect the church prop-

erty; to keep it under the control of the rightful authorities. This was especially necessary after the O'Kelly movement in 1792 when the followers of James O'Kelly claimed certain Methodist churches. The General Conference of 1796 remedied that matter by preparing a model deed, by which the churches were to be held in the name of the trustees, but on the one condition that the trustees were never to close the churches to the preachers sent by the annual conferences. After 1820 the Methodists refused to accept any church that did not agree to this arrangement. That policy started in early Methodism has lasted to the present time. No episcopal Methodist church can ever be closed to the duly appointed preacher.

The early Methodists desired plain churches. In answer to the question, "Is anything advisable with regard to building? the Methodist Discipline of 1784 said: "Let all our chapels be built plain and decent; but not more expensive than is absolutely unavoidable: otherwise the necessity of raising money will make rich men necessary to us. But if so, we must be dependent upon them, yea, and governed by them. And then farewell to the Methodist discipline, if not doctrine too." Bishop Asbury opposed any signs of Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism in the Methodist architecture. When he saw a bell on a Methodist church in Augusta, Georgia, he wrote: "And behold, here is a bell over the gallery! and cracked too; may it break! It is the first I ever saw in a house of ours in America; I hope it will be the last." A steeple on a Methodist church at Lynn, Massachusetts, caused Asbury to remark: "They have built a neat house in Lynn; but I am afraid of a steeple; and if they put this foolish addi-

tion, it must not be by Methodist order, or with Methodist money. . . . they may pay for their own pride and folly." On another occasion Asbury exclaimed: "O rare steeple-houses, bells! (Organs by-and-by?) these things are against me, and contrary to the simplicity of Christ."

Disciplinary action, however, was not needed to secure plainness in the early Methodist churches. That was above all the outstanding characteristic of those early houses of worship. In 1799 when Bishop Asbury found in Stokes county, North Carolina, a Methodist church which had "glass windows and a yard fenced in" he was so surprised that he made a note of it in his journal. In 1800 when Bishop Asbury visited a Methodist church in Nashville, Tennessee, he declared that if it were floored, ceiled and glazed, it would be a grand house. A church in Wilmington, North Carolina, that was sixty-six by thirty-six feet was described by Bishop Asbury as being "elegant."

The poverty of the early Methodists prevented them from providing means for heating the churches. As a result in the winter they worshipped in cold buildings. After Bishop Asbury had preached on December 6, 1772, in a church in Maryland that had neither windows nor doors, he recorded: "Putting a handkerchief over my head, I preached, and after an hour's intermission (the people waiting all the time in the cold) I preached again." In 1811 William Burke wrote concerning the church in Cincinnati, Ohio: "The Methodists being too poor to buy a stove to warm the house in winter, and on Sunday morning it being generally crowded, their breath would condense on the walls, and the water would run down and across the floor." Bishop Morris preached at Wolf's

Creek, Arkansas, in November, 1841. He states that the "people kindled a large fire in the front yard and when they got too cold to sit in comfort, they would go out to the fire, warm, and return."

The American Methodists followed the policy of John Wesley in requiring the separation of the men and women in the churches. The answer to the question in the Discipline of 1784, "Is there any exception to the rule, 'Let the men and women sit apart?'" was, "There is no exception. Let them sit apart in all our chapels." The strictness of the early Methodists on this point has caused Seaman jokingly to say that the "middle aisle was a dividing line over which neither sex dared to trespass."

The Methodists also demanded that all seats in the church should be free; that there should be no pews reserved for persons of wealth or influence. They demanded democracy in the meeting houses because they believed that all men were equal in the sight of God. The first who came were the first to be seated. "Free grace and free sittings" was the proud boast of the first followers of Asbury.

The policy of "free seats" did not satisfy the Methodists of New England, for some of the churches there adopted the current Congregational custom of meeting the financial obligations by the sale or rental of pews. Jesse Lee, when he returned to Boston in 1808, admitted that the Methodist church in Bromfield Street was very handsome, but he said: "it is not on the Methodist plan, for the pews are sold to the highest bidder." In 1811 the Chestnut Street Methodist church of Portland, Maine, sold nineteen pews for the sum of five hundred and forty dollars, and for the benches without backs, charged one dol-

lar a seat. The New England Methodists claimed that the pew system enabled families to be seated together; caused the higher classes of people to attend Methodist services, and solved the financial problems.

The pew system never became popular in Methodism outside of New England. On the contrary the Methodists of the Southern and Western States demanded disciplinary action against the pewed churches. The cry arose that the Methodists were forgetting the poor and catering to the wealthy and to the aristocracy. Peter Cartwright declared that the pew system excluded the poor, contravened the divine law, and prevented "the realization of that blessedness that God has provided for the poor." One annual conference resolved that the selling of pews had "a tendency to subvert the glorious peculiarity of our holy religion—'The poor have the gospel preached unto them.' " The feeling of the Methodists upon this issue was so strong that the General Conference of 1820 voted that it was contrary to Methodist economy to build houses with pews to sell or rent. The conference furthermore suggested that the annual conferences use their influence to prevent such churches from being built. The pewed churches were always in the minority in early American Methodism. They were foreign to the Methodist conception of democracy.

The modern Methodists rejoice when a new church is dedicated, but it is doubtful if it brings any greater joy than did the erection years ago of those rude one-room log buildings. Methodists of today gather in houses that are architecturally correct, but is there always to be found the warmth of feeling and the depth of devotion that characterized the worship in those pioneer Bethels? Those

small houses of worship, marked by extreme simplicity, will always hold sacred memories for the Methodists of the twentieth century, for in them their forefathers confessed their sins, sang the great hymns, heard the Divine Word read and explained, and thereby came into vital contact with their Saviour.

## § 2. CHARLES WESLEY'S CONTRIBUTION

The poetry of Charles Wesley, that great bard of Christendom, was brought to America by the first Methodist immigrants. Strawbridge, Embury and the other Methodist pioneers in the New World sang and taught their followers to love the great Wesleyan hymns. By the year 1784 hymn singing was such a vital part of Methodism that the Christmas Conference of that date officially adopted as a hymn book, John Wesley's "Collection of Psalms and Hymns."

The Christmas Conference took another step toward the encouragement of congregational singing. Question 57 of the first Discipline read: "How shall we guard against formality in singing?" Six of the twelve answers given were:

"1. By choosing such hymns as are proper for the congregation.

2. By not singing too much at once; seldom more than five or six verses.

3. By suiting the tune to the words.

4. By often stopping short and asking the people, 'Now, do you know what you said last? Did you speak no more than you felt?'

5. Do not suffer the people to sing too slow. This nat-



usually tends to formality, and is brought in by them who have either very strong or very weak voices.

10. Exhort every one in the congregation to sing, not one in ten only."

As can be seen from the foregoing instructions, the circuit riders were expected to be able singers. Ability to lead congregational music was, in fact, almost a *sine qua non* for the early Methodist preachers. They often attracted their first audience by singing a hymn. The musical ability of candidates for admission on trial into an annual conference was carefully considered. Nearly every preacher carried a tuning fork. The hymn book next to the Bible was the circuit rider's most important book of study.

It was rare to find an early Methodist preacher who was not a good singer. Even those who were the least musical could "tote" a hymn after it had been "raised" by some brother in the audience. Even though their singing may not have stood a favorable review from a modern critic, nevertheless, as Price explains, "their songs had gospel in them, and their music had soul in it." It was at annual conference, however, that the preachers excelled in singing. As a young man Bishop Marvin says he would have traveled a hundred miles to hear the itinerants sing their opening hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive?" "It was," continues Marvin, "religion set to music. . . . There was a contagion of singing all through the house. If a brother had no control of his voice, still he was not afraid to make a noise, for his discord would be drowned. It was not mere medley of voices, neither. It was music."

The Methodist minister "lined" the hymns for the congregation; that is, he read aloud two or more lines of

a hymn, the group singing them after him. This routine was followed until the entire hymn was completed. Necessity forced the adoption of this method for the minister often possessed the only hymn book in the church. Then, also, many of the people who attended the services were unable to read. Even if the people had been better educated the poor lighting of the houses of worship would have made the reading of the hymns almost impossible.

The "lining" of hymns proved of great value because the people thereby memorized the sacred songs of Methodism. Even illiterate persons learned them. The lines read by the preacher and then repeated in song by the congregation left a lasting impression upon all. The tunes were whistled by the people at their work. In fact, after Methodism had been established in any locality, it was only necessary for the preacher to read the first few lines of a great hymn since the congregation could then sing the remainder without books or further lining. Peter Cartwright says that the early Methodists "could, nearly every soul of them, sing our hymns and spiritual songs."

The Methodists put feeling and emotion into their singing. They sang as Wesley had advised, "lustily, and with a good courage." They believed in St. Paul's counsel: "Rejoice in God, and again I say rejoice." They became so happy that they "shouted." Many are the testimonies as to the power of their singing. George Peck states that the old singing was a "moral force sometimes overwhelming." James Erwin says: "Take a large congregation of those old Methodists full of the Holy Ghost, and let them sing some animating, spiritual hymn, consonant with their feeling, in all its parts, bass, tenor, alto and treble, and it would produce an overwhelming effect.

I have never known it to unroof the house, but I have known it to make strong men tremble, weep, shout, fall and stir their emotions like the waves of the ocean in a mighty storm."

When the early Methodists were able to achieve such results by congregational singing, it is easy to understand the opposition which arose when choirs were introduced into Methodist churches. Choir music was counter to the Discipline of 1784 that instructed all to take part in the singing. The champions of the old method insisted that choirs would destroy the interest of the average member in singing because he would be afraid that the paid singers would laugh at his poor efforts. They protested that often many of the members of the choirs were not converted and that such persons were praised not for pious hearts but for good voices. Others objected to surrendering public worship to ungodly persons who during the sermon showed a spirit of irreverence and levity. One man exclaimed, "It's not Methodism, and it's not religion. Good old Wesley, blessed be his name, had no choirs." James B. Finley stated the case in these words: "In many churches a few sing for all the rest; and many of the singers make no profession of religion, and look down from the gallery and seem to say to the people of God, 'You poor ignorant worshippers, you can't sing like us! Stand still and listen, and we will sing praise to God for you!'"

So strong was this hostility to choirs that some of the ministers refused to preach in churches where they were used. In 1854 when Joseph McCreery went to Lyndonville, in the Genesee Conference, he abolished choir singing. He openly announced that he had driven out "the

doves who were billing and cooing in the gallery." Bishop Hamline wrote on July 8, 1848, that he had listened to a good discourse, but "the dull (choir) singing helped me to be dull." In the same letter he stated: "O that Methodists would be Methodists! Tried to preach at 3 P. M. A large and attentive audience. Same dull choir singing." When the choir of the Methodist church at Jamestown, New York, because of a quarrel, refused to sing, the minister, Moses Hill, looking directly at the choir section, lined the following pertinent hymn:

"Let those refuse to sing  
Who never knew our God,  
But servants of the heavenly King  
May speak their joys abroad."

The introduction of musical instruments into the churches aroused an even more serious opposition. The Holston Annual Conference of 1845 resolved that "we will not directly or indirectly tolerate the introduction of instrumental music as a part of the worship of our churches, believing as we do, that such practice is a preventive of the worship of God in spirit and in truth, which we are bound by Christ to do." Henry Ward Beecher remarked that with the coming of the organ into Methodist worship, congregational singing was weakened and that "the old-time fire and Methodist enthusiasm were lacking."

An "organ war" actually broke out in early American Methodism. Many of the preachers and laymen felt toward the organ as did Dr. Adam Clarke who once announced while preaching: "If I were to see the devil flying away with that box of whistles, I would not try to stop the thief, for I should think it was his property, and

he had a right to it." Some persons even withdrew from the Methodist church because of the introduction of musical instruments. At Kokomo, Indiana, the anti-organ agitators filled the organ in the church with pepper so that the choir and congregation would sneeze when the instrument was used. Cutting the bellows was another effective method used to prevent organ music. When Hiram Kinsley dedicated a small church on the Forestville charge in the Erie Conference he included in his prayer these words: "All the instruments of music we dedicate to Thee are these voices thou hast given us." On one occasion a bass-viol was used in a church where Peter Cartwright preached. He announced the hymns by saying, "We will fiddle to the Lord, my brethren."

Although the choir and organ issues caused much agitation and some bitter feeling, yet they never destroyed the old time singing of Methodism. During the pioneer period Methodism was noted for its singing. It is perhaps impossible to estimate the great service rendered by the singing of those early days. It drew people to the Methodist meetings who would not otherwise have attended. Anthony Atwood writes: "The common people were drawn to our churches because our worship was more interesting, more lively and joyous. . . . Sister churches disliked this, because they felt none of the joy in which we gloried. They called it enthusiasm and animal excitement; but the masses of men in every community enjoyed it, and drew near to see this great sight—whole assemblies full of praise."

The inspiration of the hymns remained with the frontiersmen longer than did the preacher's message. They whistled the old tunes in the midst of their toil. The

hymns became their inspiration and their comfort. "Instead of coon songs and ragtime inanities" observes Bacon, "the man of the Kentucky or Ohio or Indiana frontier had for his popular songs the songs of Zion."

The hymns embodied the Methodist theology. There was scarcely a doctrine of Methodism that was not sung in one or more of Charles Wesley's hymns. When they were stirred by a great Wesleyan hymn the frontiersmen actually felt the experience of which the circuit riders spoke. The religious tenets were not for the Methodists cold and formal dogmas; they were related to the warmth and depth that came with the singing of a hymn. As they sang of love the Methodists felt a divine and brotherly friendship; as they sang they really experienced the nearness of God and had a sensation of sanctification. They learned of salvation in their hymns of praise. The early Methodists truly longed for a thousand tongues to sing their great Redeemer's praise.

Above all else the singing of these great hymns made the American Methodists happy people. They were not sad and morose as were their Calvinistic neighbors. The hymns which put a new song in the life of England worked the same miracle in America. It became possible to locate the Methodist homes because of the singing and whistling there. This joy was contagious. There is not a Protestant denomination in America today that does not sing the hymns of Charles Wesley.

## § 3. THE CLASS MEETING

In 1742 the Methodist society at Bristol, England, was in a precarious financial condition. At a meeting called to devise means of liquidating the indebtedness, one of the members recommended that the society be divided into groups of eleven, and that over each section there should be placed a leader whose duty it would be to secure weekly a penny from each member of his group until the debt of the chapel was paid. The suggestion was followed. The leaders obtained the money and in addition they gained much information about the members. Wesley at once saw the value of the classes for the reports of the leaders informed him weekly about the physical, financial and spiritual condition of each individual Methodist. Wesley wrote concerning this: "In a while some of these informed me, they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, This is the thing, the very thing, we have wanted so long."

The class meeting movement, although of English origin, became an outstanding characteristic of pioneer American Methodism. As soon as Robert Strawbridge located in Maryland, he organized a Methodist class. Immediately after Philip Embury had preached the first Methodist sermon in New York City, he enrolled his audience into a class. When the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1784 attendance at class meetings was made a test of fellowship. Every Methodist was required to belong to a class. The Discipline declared that all who willfully and repeatedly neglected their classes should be excluded from the society.

Only the most devout and upright laymen were selected as class leaders. The Discipline of 1784 required

that the leaders be "not only men of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God." Individuals who achieved fame in secular pursuits considered it an honor to be chosen as class leaders. Judge John McLean, while a member of the United States Supreme Court, never neglected his class at Washington, even though it met at sunrise on each Sunday morning. When Theodore Runyan was chancellor of New Jersey he would travel fifty miles each week in order to lead his class.

The pioneer class leader considered his office as a sacred trust. When Henry B. Bascom held that position he never missed a single meeting. It is recorded that "often when Eagle Creek was running full of water during the winter season, the young exhorter, Henry B. Bascom, would strip off a part of his clothes and wade the swollen stream, holding them above his head, rather than disappoint those who were anxiously awaiting his arrival." It is told of Thomas A. Morris, that "during the week he retired into the woods, kneeled by the side of a fallen tree, spread out the class-book before him, read the first name, and prayed for him, and so on through the entire list, asking for grace and wisdom to say profitable things to them on the ensuing Sabbaths."

The laymen who served as class leaders wielded a great influence over the members of their classes. The work of M'Coy, a class leader on the West Wheeling circuit in 1813, is a good example of their contributions. "He would take no frivolous excuse," says James B. Finley of M'Coy, "for neglect of class, and there were no gaddings about on Sabbath among his members; no going to soirees of fashion and pleasure. He allowed no family to live without prayer. No one who neglected the com-



munion, or indulged in the use of intoxicating drinks, could remain in his class without reformation. All the rules of Discipline were carried out in his class. No steward or preacher was allowed to say a word to his class on the subject of money. All the steward had to do was to let him know how much his class had to pay, and at the quarterly meeting it was promptly handed over to the board. None in the class were allowed to say, 'I am too poor to pay anything.' " Bishop Thomson once stated: "There can be no question that the united influence of our leaders in any charge where our system is properly worked is greater than that of its minister."

The class meetings, which were held usually in private homes, began with a short period of worship. The leader would then open his class book and call the roll of the class. He would question each member separately as to his spiritual state. The following are typical of the questions he asked: "Are you living according to the General Rules? Are you increasing in faith? Do you have the witness of the spirit? Have you resisted temptation? Do you love those who despitefully use you? Do you strive to destroy pride, self-will and impatience? Do you take up your Cross daily?" After the member answered the class leader would give him fatherly admonition, for it was the leader's disciplinary duty "to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort," as the occasion might require.

The description by James B. Finley of the first class meeting he attended is a good portrayal of those religious gatherings. Finley wrote: "The leader, as is customary on such occasions, opened the speaking exercises by relating a portion of his own experiences in which he spoke feelingly of the goodness of God to his soul. After this

he spoke to the rest in order, inquiring into their spiritual prosperity; addressing to them such language of instruction, encouragement, or reproof, as their spiritual states seemed to require. It was a time of profound and powerful feeling; every soul seemed to be engaged in the work of salvation. I was astonished beyond all expression. Instead of the ranting, incoherent declarations which I have been told they made on such occasions, I never heard more plain, simple Scriptural common sense, yet eloquent views of Christian experience in my life."

The class meetings were periods of great religious enthusiasm. Often after the class leader had spoken, other members would give advice to their fellow Methodists. Prayers were offered for the individuals who were having spiritual difficulties. Sometimes the religious fervor became so intense that the members would shout for joy. S. G. Roszel wrote in 1818: "Our class-meetings surpass anything I have ever known. In some cases after the leader had closed by prayer, the members continue for a considerable time on their knees, praying for a present and full salvation from sin. In one case, a class that meets at three o'clock P. M. did not close until ten o'clock in the evening."

The pioneer Methodists loved to attend class meetings. Dr. Lovick Pierce once declared: "In all the first half of my ministry throughout the country there was not an exception known to me, unless there was a most valid excuse, of any one belonging to the Church as an acceptable member, who neglected a weekly class meeting. Ninety-eight out of every hundred in the South Carolina Conference throughout my early ministry were present at every class meeting, unless absent on business or sick." Thomas

Burpo while serving the Mobile Mission in 1828 wrote: "We have our class-meetings regularly every week, and can truly say that they have been blessed in a peculiar manner. Such is the interest felt in these meetings by the members of Society, that they appear to be impatient for the evening to arrive, when they almost unanimously meet, looking with anxious desire and fervent prayer for a rich and heavenly repast; and, thanks be to God we are not often disappointed." After James Jenkins joined the Methodists in 1789 he rode seven miles to his class meeting. His brother lived twelve miles from the place of the meeting, yet it was a rare thing for him to miss a session.

The class meetings were intended only for the members of the Methodist societies. They were held, therefore, behind closed doors. The spiritual character of the occasion would have been changed or even destroyed had the public been allowed to attend. Strangers might be admitted two or three times without violating the disciplinary rules but not oftener. Tickets were issued quarterly to the members. A person who could not show a class ticket with his name inscribed upon it was not welcome.

The pioneer class meetings may seem crude and insignificant to some modern Methodists, but by means of them a spirit of Christian brotherhood was secured among the early followers of John Wesley. There actually existed in those meetings a small communion of saints. A Christian bond of union arose among those who weekly in those gatherings publicly confessed their sins and told of their spiritual triumphs. The members learned to rejoice with those who rejoiced and to weep with those who wept. Every convert when he came into a class meeting found

himself one of a group bound by common spiritual aspirations. In those class meetings as Sweet says. "the New Englander and the Southerner, 'the Yorker' and the Eastern Shore man, the Teuton and the Celt, mingled on a platform of exact equality."

The class meetings made possible a close supervision of all Methodists. They took the place of the modern pastoral visiting. Information was always available concerning the spiritual status of each individual Methodist. An examination of the class books of his circuit gave the preacher a good knowledge of Methodism in that region. Early Methodism was therefore able immediately to give help to the sick and needy and to reclaim the backsliders. No member was lost sight of in the growing Church. Those pioneer American Methodists watched over each other; they advised one another; they became common burden bearers. This close supervision caused Atwood to say that Bonaparte's army was not better officered and drilled than were the early members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

It was from the weekly gatherings of those devout Christians that there came the recruits for the Methodist ministry. The class leader by practice in class meetings became apt in public speech; he learned how to give comfort and admonition; he became qualified for the itinerancy. Many young men received their call to preach while laboring in a class meeting. "But for the practice," writes Rigg, "of simple and fervent utterance in the class-meeting, it is very doubtful whether such a harvest of Christian workers as has been reaped, year by year, could ever have been grown or gathered amongst us."

The class meetings kept alive the religious glow in Methodism; they prevented the Methodists from becom-

ing lukewarm and formal. "O, with what warm hearts," says Finley, "did the dear people go into the class room; and there, with sobbing hearts and flowing eyes, would tell over their trials, and what God had done for their souls; and all this in such a melting strain that the hardest heart could not remain unmoved." The class meetings became known as nurseries of scriptural holiness. A man who had noticed the contributions of the class meetings, once said to Joseph Travis, "Sir, I believe your class-meetings are the very sinews of your Church."

The golden age of the class meetings was in the pioneer period of American Methodism. As the Methodist Episcopal Church became older complaint arose that the meetings were not being attended as in former times, and that the testimonials were becoming formal and stereotyped. Finally in 1866 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, declared that attendance at class meetings was no longer a test of membership. It was contended that with the decreased size of the circuits, the preachers by their pastoral visitations could take over much of the work of the class leaders. It was also felt that the prayer meeting, the Sunday school, and missionary society could also assume many of the functions of the class meetings.

The older Methodists viewed with regret the loss of interest in the class meeting. They doubted if Methodism could ever find another institution that would contribute so powerfully to the development of the spiritual life of each individual Methodist. Many modern Methodists will agree with MacVey that the passing of the class meeting "definitely determined that the ultimate Methodist type should be a Church-man rather than a spiritual primitive."

## § 4. CAMP MEETINGS

The pioneer American Methodists not only worshipped God in rude Bethels and in private homes, but they also sang their hymns of praise and offered prayers in God's first temples, the open spaces. During the summer months thousands of loyal Methodists forsook their secular pursuits and gathered in groves and in forests that they might spend a week in divine worship. "Camp meeting" was a sacred term for Wesley's followers in America. It was the outstanding event of the year for many of them.

The exact date of the first Methodist camp meeting has never been conclusively ascertained, but an open-air religious gathering held in Lincoln county, North Carolina, in the year 1794 has, perhaps, the honor of priority. Jesse Lee, the first historian of American Methodism, believed that the camp meetings began in 1801. "I could never learn," wrote Lee, "whether they began in the upper parts of South-Carolina, in Tennessee, or in Kentucky." It was, however, not until the year 1802 that Bishop Asbury mentioned camp meetings in his journal.

Scholars may differ as to the exact date and location of the first camp meeting, but they all agree that the "Great Revival in the West" furnished the occasion for the movement. From 1797 to 1805 Kentucky, Western North Carolina, and parts of Tennessee and Ohio were so deeply affected by a religious awakening that the existing church buildings were not able to contain the large crowds that attended the services. It was also impossible for the members of a local congregation to furnish shelter and food for all the strangers. The result was that people from distant regions brought tents and provisions to the scene of the protracted meetings. Since it was no hard-

ship for the frontiersmen to live in tents and wagons during the summer season this proved a good solution to the problem of entertainment.

The camp meetings, although beginning in a revival started by Presbyterian preachers, soon became almost the exclusive property of the Methodists. Bishop Asbury, ever willing to adopt new ways of propagating Christianity, saw in the camp meeting a providential method of presenting the Christian message to the frontiersmen in sparsely settled areas. Under Asbury's leadership the camp meeting became a Methodist institution. In 1811 Bishop Asbury wrote: "Our camp-meetings, I think, amount to between 400 and 500 annually, some of which continue for the space of six or eight days."

In order to have shade for man and beast the camp meetings were held in forests or in groves. They were located near springs or other sources of water supply. Devout laymen often gave the land for the encampment. Many camp meeting sites were named for the man who donated them.

The physical equipment of a camp meeting consisted of a preachers' stand, an altar, seats, tents or huts, and some method of illumination at night. The preachers' stand was a rude elevated platform. In front of it was the altar where individuals desiring spiritual comfort could gather. The term "mourner's bench" was given to the seats within the altar rail. Beyond the altar and facing the preachers' stand were rows of seats, which were often only rough boards placed upon stumps. Sometimes there was a roof built over the seats in order to protect the people from rain. The worshippers pitched their tents, erected their huts, or placed their wagons a short

distance from the seats. Pine torches placed on poles furnished light for the evening services. It was to such crude accommodations that thousands of Methodists came each summer to enjoy a spiritual feast.

Although thousands attended the camp meeting, the tent-holders (persons who owned tents or huts) endeavored to provide food for all who needed it. West, in describing the early Alabama camp meetings, states: "There was one thing common to all Camp-meetings of that time: entertainment was free." Many Methodists who paid only a pittance to the circuit rider would bring a load of provisions to the encampment. When Susan Taul of Grassy Lick, Kentucky, was asked how she managed to attend so many camp meetings each year, she replied, "Why, when one was over, I would come home, kill a mutton or two, cook five or six hams, and bake fifteen or twenty loaves of light bread, put them on the cart, and drive then to the next one." The preachers were often forced to rebuke the people for their interest in material comforts at camp meeting. "I am grieved," declared James Jenkins in 1804, "to see so much labour and parade about eatables. . . . I think we might do without pound-cakes, preserves and many other notions. . . . and this is one great reason why more good is not done; for while they come to serve tables, to eat, drink, and dress, the poor soul is little regarded, whereas it ought to be the all-engrossing care."

Many persons attended camp meeting because of secular, social, and even sinful purposes, but it was religious reasons that attracted the loyal Methodists. "Among the Methodists," writes Boehm, "no gentlemen and ladies attended for leisure, or pure air; but they went to work



to save souls from death and acted as if they had no other business." The camp meeting was distinctly a religious gathering and spiritual matters were ever kept uppermost. The sounding of a trumpet at dawn called the people to worship, which began with private prayer meetings in the tents. A prayer meeting open to all was next held at the altar. Usually four sermons were preached daily, two in the morning, one in the afternoon, and another at night. Exhortations and prayer services followed each sermon. During the interval between public exercises all devout Methodists were expected to spend the time in some form of religious service. A North Carolinian who attended a camp meeting in 1802 wrote to a friend: "The whole of the time was taken up both day and night (time for every necessary refreshment excepted) in praying, preaching, and exhortation—divine services were constantly kept up, perhaps the whole of the time both day and night." D. Sullins states in his *Recollections*: "I have seen more than one man converted at daybreak."

The presiding elder was the acknowledged leader at the camp meetings. The Baltimore Conference of 1811 resolved that "no Camp Meeting be appointed or held except under the direction and approbation of the Presiding Elder." Many presiding elders spent all the summer months in the woods conducting camp meetings. They often held the quarterly conferences in conjunction with the camp meeting. The arrival of the presiding elder at the encampment was the signal for the beginning of divine services.

The preachers also held prominent places at the camp meeting. There was keen rivalry between the various tent-holders for the honor of entertaining them. Special

tents and huts were erected for the ministers. Some circuit riders became known as good camp meeting preachers. These were in great demand during the summer season. The success of a meeting was usually determined by the number of ministers that attended. While one circuit rider preached the others would be in the tents imploring divine assistance for the speaker, or would be helping the penitents at the altar.

The Methodists expressed their spiritual fervor at camp meeting in their singing. They sang lustily and with meaning. It was soon found, however, that the poems of Charles Wesley were neither lively enough nor sufficiently emotional. As a result there came into Methodism during the camp meeting period a new type of music, which can only be adequately described as "camp meeting music." The hymns or spiritual songs had only short verses but had lengthy choruses or refrains which in the excitement of the occasion were repeated many times. The hymns by their vivid portrayal of such themes as sin, salvation, death, heaven and hell, appealed to the emotions of the audience. The following verse from a popular camp meeting hymn is typical of "camp meeting music":

"Stop, poor sinner, stop and think,  
 Before you further go:  
 Can you sport upon the brink  
 Of everlasting woe?  
 Hell beneath is gaping wide,  
 Vengeance waits the dread command,  
 Soon will stop your sport and pride,  
 And sink you with the damn'd."

Many strange physical demonstrations occurred at the camp meetings. The records show that people were so affected by the preaching, the singing, and the general excitement of the camp meetings that they would faint and swoon and be unconscious for hours. Others would so lose control of their muscles that they would be unable to keep their arms or head from jerking. A description of the jerking is given by Peter Cartwright in his Autobiography. Cartwright wrote: "To see those proud young gentlemen and young ladies dressed in their silks, jewelry, and prunella, from top to toe take the jerks would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so you would see their fine bonnets, caps and combs fly and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a waggoner's whip." In addition to the fainting spells and "jerks" there were those who were affected by "dancing" and "laughing" exercises. Even individuals who came to witness these unusual phenomena were themselves struck down or afflicted with the "jerks." One historian states that "at first appearance these meetings exhibited nothing to the spectator, unacquainted with them, but a scene of confusion such as scarce can be put into human language."

Many explanations were offered to account for the bodily exercises. Some leaders claimed that they were manifestations of the power of God while others felt that the devil was responsible for the phenomena. The most plausible interpretation is that the sudden change of environment plus the excitement incident to a camp meeting produced strange physical and psychical reactions in people not trained to control their emotions. The majority of the individuals who attended camp meeting lived dur-

ing the other weeks of the year a quiet, isolated life. When they came to camp meeting they mingled with thousands of people. The sermons and the music kept continually before them the terrors of hell and the joyful hope of eternal life. All of these factors affected the nervous structure of the frontiersmen.

Despite scenes of tumult and confusion the camp meetings served a great purpose during the frontier period. Much has been written about their social value, but that was only a lesser contribution. A great service of the camp meeting was that of bringing large crowds of people together and causing them to concentrate their thoughts upon the sacred things of life. The claims of religion were thereby presented to thousands and tens of thousands who might never have been reached even by the circuit rider. The novelty of the meetings with their physical phenomena attracted individuals who never attended divine services elsewhere.

Thousands of men and women were converted at the camp meetings. At the close of the meetings wide areas of the frontier would be dotted with converts and many new names would be added to the membership of the Methodist societies. Immediately after the beginning of the camp meeting movement there was a noticeable numerical increase in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The report of Henry Boehm, who was secretary of a camp meeting at Smyrna, Delaware, in 1805, shows the contributions of the camp meetings in saving souls. "On the first day," according to the record, "there were 47 persons converted and 9 wholly sanctified. The results of the second day was 100 converted and 75 wholly sanctified. The next morning there were 62 converted and 53 wholly sanc-

tified. And during the entire meeting there were 1100 persons converted and 600 wholly sanctified." It is no wonder that Bishop Asbury once described the camp meeting months as "our harvest season."

There was still another contribution from the assembling of thousands in the groves for religious purposes. Methodists that lived isolated lives came to realize that they were not alone in religious endeavor but that they were members of a large family. As Luccock states: "In the warmth of the large group, in the touch of elbow against elbow, men and women by the thousand found courage to face the temptations of the raw, new life which they had not found before."

## CHAPTER VII

### STRICTNESS OF EARLY METHODISM

#### § 1. BEARING THE CROSS



IN America as well as in England the pioneer Methodists bore the Cross. It is no exaggeration to say that the first followers of John Wesley in the New World were despised and rejected of men. Many were the methods used in attacking them.

The spreading of pernicious propaganda was a popular way of persecuting the early American Methodists. It is amazing to read of the falsehoods circulated against them. Enoch George, who later became a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, was, as a youth, violently opposed to Methodists because he had been taught to believe that they were "an idle, lazy, enthusiastic set of Tories, whom King George had sent over from England to sow the seeds of discord among the citizens of America." In New England it was reported that the Methodists were the emissaries of the French government and that France was planning to subjugate America whenever the Methodists there should become sufficiently numerous. A Congregational minister of New England warned his congregation against the six hundred Methodist preachers who were "going through the country, preaching damnable doctrines, and picking men's pockets." James B. Finley states that as a boy he had been taught to believe that the Methodists were the worst of all deceivers. It is difficult to find evils with which the Methodist were not charged.

The early Methodists were treated with contempt and disrespect by their fellow countrymen. They were ostracised by the aristocracy of America. They were denied social standing in the old established communities. In the Southern States the social elite called the Methodist itinerants the "nigger preachers" and asserted that the cultured people were never to be found in the Methodist Church. In Charleston, South Carolina, it was openly asserted that Methodism was successful among the Negroes because it was only suited to them. After Bishop Asbury visited Washington, North Carolina, he wrote in his journal: "The whites look upon us with contempt." Disrespect for the Methodists, however, was not confined to any one section of the country. When Amy Witherell of Vermont desired to borrow a horse from a neighbor in order to attend a Methodist service, the request was granted only on condition that the horse should be hitched out of hearing distance of the church. The owner declared that his horse would be contaminated by a Methodist sermon. When Anthony Atwood of the Philadelphia Annual Conference inquired for a room to hold a Methodist meeting, a man replied: "O yes, I have a large pig-pen that will hold many; you can have that with pleasure."

Even Bishop Asbury was denied at times the courtesies due his episcopal office. When he visited Yale College in 1791 he was coldly received. He wrote in his journal: "We visited the college chapel at the hour of prayer: I wished to go through the whole, to inspect the interior arrangements, but no one invited me." When Asbury was in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1795 he was openly insulted on the streets, "with" as he said, "some as horrible sayings as could come out of a creature's mouth on this side of hell."

The breaking up of a Methodist service offered great sport and amusement for the rougher element of America. It was often necessary to station guards outside of a Methodist meeting-house to protect the worshippers from assaults. When John Scripps preached at Kaskaskia, Illinois, the Roman Catholics there made so much noise that it was only stopped by the appearance of the governor of the territory. In Wilmington, Delaware, in 1791 the mob spirit was aroused against the Methodists. Thomas Ware, the Methodist minister there, wrote as follows concerning the attitude of the opponents of Methodism: "Hence the house in which we worshipped was surrounded by hundreds of those sons of Belial night after night, while there were scarcely fifty within; and such were their character and conduct that females were afraid to attend our meeting at night, and we had no alternative, but to commence service in time to dismiss the congregation before dark."

Many of the pioneer Methodist preachers carried the scars of physical violence to their graves. In March, 1788, after Bishop Asbury had preached in Charleston, South Carolina, he made the following notation in his journal: "Again whilst I was speaking at night, a stone was thrown against the north side of the church; then another on the south; a third came through the pulpit window, and struck near me inside the pulpit." Abel Stevens has summarized in this fashion the violent treatment received by Methodist itinerants in New England: "Dow's nose was publicly wrung; Sabin was knocked down and struck on the head to the peril of his life with the butt of a gun; Wood was horsewhipped; Christie summoned out of bed to answer to a charge of violating the laws by marrying a



couple of his people; Willard wounded in the eye by a blow, the effect of which was seen through his life; Mudge denied the rights of a clergyman and arraigned before the magistrate for assuming them; Kirby stoned while preaching and Taylor drummed out of town."

Methodist property was not safe in early America. In 1785 a mob threw the benches out of the Methodist meeting-house in Charleston, South Carolina. A few years later when the Methodists at Provincetown, Massachusetts had secured the lumber for the erection of a church, a crowd of base characters made a bonfire of it. When four months later new timber had been secured, "a nightly guard of four Methodist brethren, armed with loaded muskets, was set, while all the male members slept with clubs and staves at hand, ready to run to the defense of their slowly rising Zion." Methodist worshippers at the close of divine services often found their saddles cut or the wheels removed from their vehicles. Even the horses of the Methodists were mistreated. When James B. Finley went to Newark, Ohio, in 1811, he hid his horse in the bushes, "fearing," as he said, "the citizens would cut my saddle, or shave my horse."

The Methodists had to face literary persecution, for in America as in England the press was used to bring odium upon the Methodists. Editors and contributors attacked Methodism not only as being fanaticism but also as being dangerous to society. One newspaper went so far as to label Methodism as "the gangrene of modern religious history." When Stith Mead began to preach in Lynchburg, Virginia, scurrilous articles against him appeared in the newspapers. He was called "a greater disgrace to humanity than the most dissolute man in Lynchburg."

When Bishop Asbury held the South Carolina Conference at Charleston in 1789 "the public newspapers teemed with invectives of the most virulent nature, and the bishops were represented as men who were attempting to subvert the established order of things."

Even the clergy of other denominations participated in the attack upon Methodism. They represented the Methodists in the most unfavorable manner and warned their people against them. Perminter Morgan, a Baptist preacher, led the ruffian band in Rutherford county, North Carolina, that seized Daniel Asbury and took him to a magistrate on the charge of preaching without authority. A Presbyterian minister of Charlotte, North Carolina, warned his members to have nothing to do with the Methodists, whom he described as "a sneaking lot." A Hard Shell Baptist preacher in South Carolina announced that the Methodists were more to be dreaded than the frogs of Egypt. On Christmas Day, 1800, a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church preached the funeral sermon of Methodism on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. President Ezra Stiles of Yale College publicly predicted that by the end of another century Methodism would disappear from America. When Reverend John J. Jerry went, in 1823, to St. Augustine, Florida, a Roman Catholic priest in violent language forbade him to preach there.

The life of a Methodist convert was not pleasant. Parents disinherited their children for aligning themselves with the Methodists. At Thurman's Patent in the Troy Conference "two young women were so whipped by their father that the blood ran down to their feet, and he then turned them out of doors, and they walked fifteen miles

to a Methodist society." When John Cooper of New Jersey united with the Methodists his father became so angry that once finding his son kneeling in prayer, he threw a shovel of burning coals upon him. Louis R. Fechtig of Hagerstown, Maryland, joined the Methodists, but he had to suffer almost daily beatings from his father and employer, who "were determined to whip Methodism out of him." When Mrs. Thomas Hinde of the Holston region embraced Methodism, her husband applied a blister plaster to her neck in order to extract the Methodist evil.

From a social and economic standpoint it was precarious in most places of early America to become a Methodist. It meant the loss of friends. When Wilbur Fisk entered the Methodist ministry, a college friend in disgust wrote to him: "Fisk, I know your ambition too well; it is exorbitant. And here I can solve the enigma. I fear, like the patron saint of your order, John Wesley, you have given yourself up to a disposition to 'rule in hell' rather than 'serve in heaven.'" Robert Furness, the owner of a public inn at New Castle, Delaware, lost many of his former patrons when he joined the Methodists. In 1814 when Dr. D——, a Methodist, began practicing medicine in Charlotte, North Carolina, he opened his home to Methodist preachers and aided them in their work. The Presbyterian minister at Charlotte, Reverend S. C. C. thereupon "went through his congregations, from house to house, warning them to have nothing to do with Dr. D., saying he was a dangerous man, &c., &c., and at the same time commending a Dr. M'K., an avowed infidel, and the only opponent Dr. D. had to contend." For a time the Methodist physician's practice was almost ruined.

It is interesting, however, to note that Methodism was

not destroyed by false rumors, physical violence, literary attacks or discriminations. To the contrary, the Methodists although everywhere spoken against yet everywhere increased. The continual assaults upon the Methodists only served to advertise them. People out of curiosity went to hear and see Methodist preachers. Bishop Roberts once truly observed that the American Methodists "wandered about almost unknowing and unknown, 'Till persecution dragg'd them into fame."

Persecution produced a great race of Methodists. When aligning with the Methodists meant bearing the Cross, only those joined who were earnest and brave. The Methodist societies were not crowded with half-hearted, luke-warm members. As Crane says: "Thus the dishonor which rested upon the Methodist Episcopal Church was like the cold bath which the ancient Spartans administered to their new born infants; it secured general vigor among the people because none but the vigorous had strength to survive it."

## § 2. ENFORCING DISCIPLINE

The pioneer Methodists felt that they were not of this world. Other-worldliness and self-denial were two of their outstanding characteristics. Numerous passages of Scripture gave them this viewpoint. Jesus had said that it was impossible to serve both God and mammon. In I John 2:15 these words were found: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The Apostle Paul in writing to the Colossian Church advised the members to set their affections on heavenly things, not on earthy

pursuits. The early Methodists further believed conversion to mean both an inward and an outward change; that a loyal Christian had no desire for worldly things. Did it not say in II Corinthians, 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The literal interpretation of Scripture caused the Methodists to adopt a policy of strict morality. Strickland describes the first American Methodists as peculiar people in their personal appearance and manners, who could be distinguished from the world at a single glance.

To enable his first followers in England to more easily keep themselves unspotted from the world, John Wesley in 1743 published "The General Rules," a series of practical daily regulations. Although general in nature, these rules pointed out the things which were to be avoided by those who really desired "to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." About the same time Wesley prepared a manual for his preachers, entitled "Rules for a Helper." At the Christmas Conference the American Methodists accepted Wesley's General Rules as their guide for Christian conduct. The "Rules for a Helper" were included in the first Methodist Book of Discipline. Every convert to Methodism promised to abide by the General Rules. Each Methodist preacher was required to read them "once a quarter in each society and once a year in every congregation."

The pioneer Methodists could not conscientiously participate in the amusements and recreations of the world. John Wesley's attitude was that a Christian should show his Christianity in every act of life. He followed the advice of the Apostle Paul, who in writing to the Corin-

thian Church had said: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Wesley knew that the Methodists could not engage in the gross and sinful sports of eighteenth century England without lowering or destroying their spirituality. The topic of amusements was therefore mentioned in the General Rules. The members of the Methodist societies were instructed to avoid, "The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." This was Wesley's official statement on the subject of amusements. It was adopted by the American Methodists at the Christmas Conference. The American Methodists agreed with Wesley that there were very few sports and amusements of that day that could be taken in the name of the Saviour or be done to the glory of God.

Dancing was banned. It was a diversion that could not be taken in the name of the Lord because it was so often associated with intemperance and immorality. Dancing was denounced because it tended to destroy the spirituality of its devotees. As Hiram Mattison once asked: "Who ever knew a votary of the ball-room to pray in his family, or in prayer-meetings, or attend class-meetings? Who ever saw one laboring in a revival to bring sinners to Christ?" Many dances were stopped by the appearance of a Methodist preacher. On one occasion Hope Hull came to a home where a ball was held. When he was invited to dance, Hull went upon the floor, but instead of dancing he said: "I never engage in any kind of business without first asking the blessing of God upon it, so let us pray." It is recorded that at the close of Hull's earnest prayer, "All present were amazed and overwhelmed; many fled in terror from the house, while others, feeling the power

of God in their midst, began to plead for mercy and forgiveness." The dance floor became four weeks later a preaching place for Hull.

A loyal Methodist did not attend theatres, circuses or horse races. Methodist opposition to the theatre began when John Wesley denounced the English theatre of the eighteenth century as "the sink of all profaneness and debauchery." Again in 1764 when Wesley protested against the erection of a theatre at Bristol, he declared that "the present stage entertainments not only sap the foundation of all religion, but tend to drinking and debauchery of every kind, which are constant attendants on these entertainments." The branch office of the Methodist Book Concern at Cincinnati refused to sell the works of Shakespeare, for fear that such action might encourage the theatre and drama. Bishop Marvin favored agricultural fairs until they began to stress horse racing and gambling. He then stigmatized them as "schools of vice." James Latta, a Methodist preacher of Illinois is remembered for his unique statement: "There is a class of people who can't go to hell fast enough on foot, they get on their poor mean ponies, and go to the horse race."

Card playing was condemned as being not only worldly but as also tending toward other evils. It brought virtuous youths into association with wicked men. Frontier America furnished many examples of pious men who developed into gamblers and even murderers because of the gaming table. Card playing was also considered a waste of precious moments. It did not redeem the time. It was contrary to the advice of Wesley that Christians should buy "every possible moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business, etc."

Methodism also looked askance upon many of the social gatherings because it was held that such meetings lasting late into the night were not in keeping with true spirituality. The following excerpt from the journal of S. B. Bangs, who was then in his twenties, and a graduate of the University of the City of New York, is typical of the attitude of some of the early Methodists: "Last evening I attended a social company—from which I could not retire till midnight, and I have not enjoyed a moment's sleep since. There is nothing to be said that can countervail the injurious and poisonous tendencies of these motley, flippant, and prolonged parties. They are either deadly to every religious feeling in those who mingle in the hilarity and partake of the sports, or they are irksome and painful to those who choose to be singular among many for the sake of dear principles. . . . I never go to one of these assemblies without forsaking it dissatisfied."

The General Rules forbade the wearing of fashionable and costly garments. It was not considered a Christian characteristic to have a fondness for such things. It indicated pride. The Methodists felt that it was sinful to wear fine clothes when so many people lived in poverty. The early followers of Wesley therefore dressed in plain apparel. The women wore black bonnets without any trimmings. Their dresses were almost Quaker in style, destitute of ruffles and frills. Persons who joined the Methodist Episcopal Church knew in advance that they must change their mode of dress. When Nathan Bangs was converted in 1800 he had his laundress remove the pleats from his shirt.

The Discipline of 1784 instructed the preachers to



speaking frequently and faithfully against the superfluity of dress. This they did, very often to the embarrassment of some of their listeners. Upon one occasion when Jacob Gruber was preaching, an unusually tall lady entered the church. Gruber paused abruptly and ejaculated: "Make room for that lady; one might have thought she was tall enough to be seen without the plumage of that bird in her bonnet." When a gaudily dressed lady once met Joseph Mitchell, an early circuit rider, the latter exclaimed, "Young woman, one flash of hell-fire would burn off all those furbelows." Thomas Foster, a Methodist preacher in New York City, refused to allow the sisters to wear fringed shawls in his church.

The wearing of jewelry was also considered to be sinful. Had not Paul advised the women to adorn themselves with good works rather than with gold, or pearls, or costly array? The seriousness of this offense can be seen by this excerpt from the journal of Beardsley, an itinerant in Ohio: "My soul is deeply pained. O, my God, what will become of thy Church? Several of our members wear earrings. Some of them finger rings, etc. Lord, pity them! Give me grace and wisdom!" James Axley declared that if God had intended women to wear earrings he would have made holes in their ears.

The Methodists claimed that the hair should be dressed in the way nature intended it, and not after the fashion of the world. The testimony of Joseph Carson is very interesting on this point. He says: "My earliest recollection of Methodism in Winchester (Virginia) dates back to 1791, when I was but six years old. About this time my brother, Brattie Carson, joined the Church, and doubt not my youthful mind was more deeply impressed with

the fact, from my distress at his cutting short his elegant suit of hair, which it was then fashionable to wear in a queue; but there was not room for a man and queue both in the Methodist Church in those days."

The early Methodists could also be recognized by many other tests. They were strict observers of the Sabbath. On Saturday the cooking was done for Sunday. Drinking and cursing of course were never allowed. Neither could a man be a good Methodist and hold enmity against a brother. At the quarterly conference of the Chautauqua circuit, New York, held July 3, 1824, it was resolved that "Asa Smith's license (as an exhorter) be left with Brother Joseph Phillips to be delivered whenever a difference existing between him and Brother Picket is settled."

The Methodist rules against worldliness were actually enforced. Members were dropped from the rolls of the societies for breaches of discipline. It was not possible for a Methodist to gamble, play cards, wear stylish clothes, and at the same time remain in the Church. Smith has described the strictness of the Georgia Conference of the early nineteenth century in this manner: "Three times absent from class, a ribbon, a ruffle, or a ring, and the preacher erased the name from the class-book." A quarterly conference in pioneer Methodism which did not have at least one trial involving some breach of Methodist discipline was a rare occurrence.

The Methodists soon won a reputation for high morality and for plain amusements. The Methodist stand on any great moral issue was known in advance. A man in calling upon the people to debar the Methodists from a vicinity said: "For no one might never again dance at a

'hoe-down,' drink whiskey at a shuckin' or race hosses on Sunday, without a lecture from somebody." When Rhoda Laws joined the Methodists on the Somerset circuit in Maryland, her brother exclaimed: "And now she must give up gay dress, dancing, and worldly amusements. She is ruined, and cannot be gotten way."

Late in life Bishop Asbury began to fear that the Methodists might not remain loyal to the discipline. In 1815 Bishop Asbury was at Springfield, Ohio. He stopped at a home known for its loyalty to Methodism. Upon the bishop's arrival, the fashionably dressed daughter of the house, who was playing the piano, made some flippant remarks about the funny looking preachers. When the grandmother came into the room Bishop Asbury took her hand and looking her in the face, said, as tears came to his eyes: "I was looking to see if I could trace in the lineaments of your face, the likeness of your sainted mother. She belonged to the first generation of Methodists. She lived a holy life, and died a most happy and triumphant death. You and your husband," continued the bishop, "belong to the second generation of Methodists. Your son and his wife are the third, and that young girl, your granddaughter, represents the fourth. She has learned to dress and play on the piano, and is versed in all the arts of fashionable life, and I presume, at this rate of progress, the fifth generation of Methodists will be sent to dancing-school."

## § 3. MORAL PIONEERS

When John Wesley in 1743 required all members of the Methodist societies to abstain from drinking, buying, or selling spirituous liquors, he was enacting the first ecclesiastical legislation in favor of outlawing intoxicating liquors. By this action and subsequent attacks upon the use of alcoholic beverages, Wesley secured the enmity of all those who profited by the liquor traffic. Alehouse keepers especially came to hate Wesley because a convert to Methodism meant one less customer for those robbers of mankind.

John Wesley's work in the field of temperance was continued by the pioneer American Methodists. In 1789 the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church expressly forbade "drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them." This action was significant because it placed the Methodist Episcopal Church at its very beginning in open hostility to alcohol; it outlined what was to be the future policy of the Church toward that ancient evil.

The Methodist position regarding the liquor traffic stood counter to current public opinion. Alcoholic products were commonly used in early America both as beverages and as a medium of exchange. In commenting on the social conditions on the frontier, James B. Finley wrote in 1811: "Liquor was freely used in early days. It was also regarded as a necessary beverage. A house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could there be a log-rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding or a funeral, without the aid of alcohol." A similar situation existed in the Southern States, where according to G. G. Smith, "Everybody drank, many to excess, nearly all

moderately." While traveling in New England in 1788, a Frenchman, Brissot de Warville, was surprised at the great abundance and variety of alcoholic beverages used there. He found that the people preferred ardent spirits to milder liquors. The use of intoxicants at funerals caused Ezekiel Cooper to write in 1789: "Many are glad of a funeral that they may get something to drink." It occasioned comment to find a temperate individual. Bishop Asbury once recorded in his journal concerning a man in Tennessee: "It may not be amiss to mention that our host has built his house and takes in his harvest without the aid of whisky." It was in a nation addicted to the use of alcohol that the Methodists, almost singlehanded, began their campaign for temperance.

Bishop Asbury was the leader in the Methodist fight against intemperance. He contended that there were two classes of men that he feared, drunken ones and lunatics. In 1812 he declared that liquor was the "prime curse of the United States, and will be, I fear much, the ruin of all that is excellent in morals and government in them." By example as well as by precept Asbury influenced the pioneer Methodists toward sobriety. His attitude when whisky was offered to him, left a lasting impression upon the people. Upon one occasion when Bishop Asbury reproved his hostess for offering him liquor, the lady replied, "Bishop, it is good in its place." The bishop thereupon hid the bottle in an old cupboard, saying, "Now it is in its place, let it remain there." Many similar references regarding his attitude toward intoxicants are found in Asbury's journal. He once recorded: "We dined in the woods, and stopped at Esquire Leech's; brandy and the Bible were both handed me; one was enough—I took but one."

The circuit riders helped Asbury in his fight for temperance. Even before the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church it had been said that it was "but seldom known that a Methodist preacher drank spirituous liquors, unless in cases of extreme necessity." The itinerants soon realized that liquor and vital religion could not go together. They, therefore, in fiery language denounced from the pulpit the use of intoxicants, insisting that all persons who sold and used liquor were "hair-strung and breeze-shaken over hell." Alexander M'Iroy of the Pittsburg Conference had a special sermon which traced the drunkard through a miserable life to an untimely grave, and premature hell, "where," declared M'Iroy, "the devil will pour the blue blazes of damnation down your throats with an iron scoop-shovel, when you'll drink fire enough to satisfy you." It is not surprising that after such sermons entire congregations would pledge to abstain from the use of alcohol.

In conversation with the occupants of the frontier cabins the Methodist preachers endeavored to impress upon them the folly of drinking alcoholic beverages. To show their disapproval of liquor many ministers would not sleep in a room where it was stored. The action of John Collins typifies the influence of the circuit rider for temperance. Collins found that one of his members was erecting a distillery. In vain Collins begged and argued with the layman that he should discard his plan. Finally Collins said: "Brother you know that we should pray to God for direction and success in everything. Now brother, go into your closet, and there solemnly bow before God and say: 'O Lord God, I am about to erect a distillery; do thou give me success in it, and enable me to

make whisky enough to destroy a great many souls, for whom Christ died'." Needless to say that distillery was never completed.

At the annual conferences the circuit riders passed resolutions in favor of abstinence and laid plans to overthrow the liquor traffic. The Tennessee Conference of 1834 resolved that all its members were morally obligated to form a temperance society in every Methodist congregation. Some conferences even refused to use ardent spirits for sacramental purposes. The Wisconsin Conference of 1852 advised the preachers to procure "the juice of the grape in the purest state possible for sacramental or medicinal purposes, regardless of expense or trouble." Memorials were sent to the state legislatures urging the adoption of license laws. The voters were asked by the conferences to elect only those officials who favored the cause of temperance.

Not all pioneer Methodist laymen agreed with the attitude of the itinerants toward alcohol. With arguments that sound very modern the preachers were assailed by some of their own members. Once when James B. Finley was preaching against liquor, an exhorter arose and said: "Young man, I advise you to leave the circuit and go home, for you are doing more harm than good; and if you can't preach the Gospel and let people's private business alone, they do not want you at all." To that Finley replied, "I will not go home; and I have a mission from God to break up this stronghold of the devil. By his help I will do it, despite of all distillers and aiders and abettors in the Church."

It was contended that the policy of the circuit riders toward rum would ruin the Methodist Episcopal Church.

When Wilbur Fisk went to a town in Connecticut to deliver a temperance lecture, a Methodist layman, begged him to cancel the engagement because it would start a schism in the local church since some of the Methodists sold and used liquor. Fisk's answer was, "Sir, if the church stands on rum, let it go." When S. P. Richardson was pastor at Quincy, Florida, in 1848, he was warned by the sheriff, whose wife was a Methodist, to stop preaching about the evils of alcohol. The officer threatened to withdraw his subscription and to cause his wife to leave the church. Richardson's reply was to cancel the sheriff's subscription and to inform him that he did not want whisky money.

Sometimes it was necessary for the circuit riders to use force to secure temperance among the laymen. Occasionally they had to adopt practices used against the rowdies at camp meetings. Granville Moody once found that one of his members, Jones, a groceryman, was selling whisky. When the latter refused to stop, Moody removed his name from the church roll. As this action damaged Jones's business, he determined to do physical harm to Moody. He enticed Moody into a room, locked the door, secured a whip and threatened: "In short, I intend to cowhide you, sir."

"Don't do it," said Moody.

"And why not, sir?" exclaimed the man in rage.

"You know we Methodists" answered Moody, "believe in the possibility of falling from grace."

"Well, sir?"

"Well, Brother Jones," coolly replied Moody, "if you strike me with that cowhide, it is very likely that I shall fall from grace."



Jones giving a startled glance at Moody, who was six feet, four inches tall, stammered, "W-h, w-h-y, Doctor, you surely don't intend to say that you'd fight."

"I say nothing about that" answered Moody, "but I do say, Brother Jones that if you strike me a single blow, I shall be very likely to fall from grace, and if I do fall from grace, you will certainly be the worst whipped man in the state of Ohio."

If some Methodist laymen objected to the war that the preachers waged against intemperance, it can easily be imagined what position would be taken by the anti-Methodists and the men who profited financially by the liquor traffic. The distillers and the saloon-keepers began to attack the "righteous overmuch Methodist preachers." The ministers were denounced for interfering with legitimate business. As in modern times the Methodist preachers were told to preach the gospel and leave all other matters alone. James B. Finley in the following manner tells of his experience in fighting against alcohol in Ohio: "My efforts, as a matter of course, awakened the ire and indignation of the makers and venders of the ardent, and their curses were heaped on me in profusion. They would gladly have driven me from the country if they could, but this was beyond their power. One of the greatest distillers in the land said I was worse than a robber, as I had prevented him from selling whisky to the harvesters, and his family was likely to suffer."

The Methodists were not deterred by such opposition. They were not afraid to champion what was then the unpopular cause of temperance. They were so far in advance of all others in the fight against alcohol that when the American Temperance Society was organized in 1826,

the Methodists for a time declined to join, saying, "We are already in an earlier and better Temperance Society than any man can institute."

Since the circuit riders always went where the people congregated, they invaded the very strongholds of the liquor traffic. In many frontier villages the first Methodist sermon was preached in a bar-room, for there a crowd was certain to be found. Such a policy was followed especially on the Pacific Coast. The preachers delivered their message in the saloons and gambling houses. A Californian after having listened to a Methodist sermon in an unusual place remarked to a group of men: "Well, boys, you may say what you please about the wickedness of Californians, but they are better than the Jews were in the day of Jesus Christ; for then they made the house of God a den of thieves, but now they are making a den of thieves the house of God."

#### § 4. DEFENDING THE FAITH

The founders of Methodism were not narrow sectarians. John Wesley often repeated: "I am a member of the Church of England, but I love good men of every denomination." Once when speaking of the many religious sects Wesley said: "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?" Bishop Francis Asbury held the same tolerant views. He was friendly to people of all faiths. He was opposed to ecclesiastical quarrels. In 1791 he wrote: "I am clear that controversy should be avoided; because we have better work to do, and because it is too common that when debates run high, there are wrong words and tempers indulged on both sides."

The early Methodists, however, were unable, due to the actions of the older denominations, to follow the advice of Wesley and Asbury. From the beginning of Methodism in America, the old established churches had shown toward it an attitude of disdain. The phenomenal growth of Methodism, despite this uncharitable spirit, caused the same churches to change to a policy of open hostility. During the first seventy-five years of its history, American Methodism was assailed from non-Methodist pulpits and denounced in books, pamphlets, and religious periodicals. Alfred Brunson, a pioneer Methodist itinerant, declared that the American religious leaders considered the Methodist preachers a set of outlaws, "whom any one had a right to attack, ridicule, or even annihilate in argument if he could."

The Calvinists were, perhaps, the most bitter opponents of Methodism. Their attack was mainly theological. The Arminian views of John Wesley were counter to the Calvinistic conception that salvation was only for those who were arbitrarily predestined by God. A determined effort was therefore made by the Presbyterian and Congregational leaders to discredit Methodism. At first the attacks were based upon argument but soon there arose a vindictive spirit. In 1811 a Presbyterian minister in Cincinnati, Ohio, wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Episcopal Methodism; or Dagonism Exhibited." He insisted that Methodists were "atheists, infidels, hypocrites, blasphemers, hellish monsters, vociferators, simpletons, fools, idiots, etc." While many books and pamphlets were published by Calvinistic theologians attacking Methodism, the "Century of Puritanism and a Century of Its Opposites" written in 1855 by Parsons Cooke, the pastor of the

First Congregational church of Lynn, Massachusetts, was perhaps the most virulent. In this work Cooke declared that Methodism tended to "Universalism, and all other isms; Unitarianism, Rowdyism, Spiritualism, Grahamism, Phrenology, Biology, Mesmerism, Mormonism, Fourierism, and Infidelism."

The enthusiasm of the Methodists was the basis for further attack by the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians. The cultured Calvinists asserted that the Methodists were degrading religion by their revivals, camp meetings, and class meetings. Parsons Cooke contended that Methodism seemed to be framed to meet the tastes of depraved minds; that it labored not to lift men up to religion, but to lower religion to the depraved inclinations of men.

The Baptists vied with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in their denunciation of Methodism. Their attack centered about the mode of baptism, the baptism of infants, "close communion," and ecclesiastical polity. The Methodists were assailed for not baptizing by immersion. Baptists who knew only one Greek word, "baptizo," would argue for hours that "baptizo" meant baptism only by immersion. "The Baptists," said Peter Cartwright, "made so much ado about baptism by immersion that the uninformed would suppose that heaven was on an island and there was no way to get there but by diving or swimming." He further claimed that the Baptists would follow after the Methodist itinerants, crying, "Water! Water! Water!" and that during the absence of the preachers at other points on the circuit the Baptists would attempt to rush the Methodist converts into the water.

The most severe Baptist attack upon Methodism was made by Reverend J. R. Graves, editor of "The Tennessee Baptist." In 1855 Graves published a book entitled, "The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed." It is perhaps the most repulsive book ever written against Methodism. Graves asserted that Methodism never had and never would save a soul, for it was a human invention, "the grand-daughter of Rome, the grand-child of the 'Man of Sin and Son of Perdition!'" He maintained that a Christian who entered a Methodist society surrendered all his right as a man and as a Christian and jeopardized his moral character. This scurrilous book nevertheless was enthusiastically received by the Baptists of the Southern States.

The Protestant Episcopal Church also turned its literary artillery upon the Methodists. The leaders of that denomination claimed that since the Methodist episcopacy was not founded upon apostolic succession Methodism had no right to use the episcopal form of government. They pronounced Wesley's ordination of Dr. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury's elevation to the episcopacy at the Christmas Conference to be illegal acts. It was contended that the Methodist ministers, not having received valid ordination, could not administer the sacraments. A pamphlet entitled, "Tracts for the People, No. IV," printed and widely circulated by the Protestant Episcopal Church, stated: "Methodism is not a church—has no sacraments, has no ministry, no divine warrant." As late as 1862 President S. Y. McMasters of St. Paul's College, Palmyra, Missouri, wrote a novel called "A Methodist in Search of the Church." This book represented a young Methodist minister finally coming to the

conclusion that the Methodist Episcopal Church had no valid ecclesiastical standing. He then joined the Protestant Episcopal Church where he found happiness and was no longer troubled with doubts as to the true church.

The other denominations (with the possible exception of the Society of Friends) joined with the leaders of the Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, and Protestant Episcopal churches in their denunciation of Methodism. The Methodists were everywhere spoken and written against. The Roman Catholics assailed them as being heretics. The Disciples of Christ, first known as the Campbellites, criticised the Methodist mode of baptism, while the Universalists, who believed in the final salvation of all mankind, ridiculed the Methodist ministers for their teachings in regard to the future punishment of sinners.

In the face of such attacks it was difficult for the Methodists to avoid controversy. The attitude of the older churches made it necessary for the Methodist clergy to defend their Church. Methodism was forced to take the field as a controversialist or to be branded with cowardice. Methodist preaching became polemical.

A surprise awaited the opponents of Methodism when the circuit riders entered the lists. Men formerly considered as easy targets for attack became forensic giants; became defenders of the faith; became the victorious champions of the Methodist doctrines and usages. The Methodist preachers became militant. They began to obey their ordination promise to "drive away all strange and false doctrines." James M'Intire announced that he was ready to meet "any man, at any time, anywhere between Mt. Vernon and the lakes, to debate by the day, or by the week, or during life." Anning Owen of the Genesee Con-

ference put the following passage in all of his public prayers: "O Lord, put a stop to Mohammedanism, Judaism, Heàthenism, Atheism, Deism, Universalism, Calvinism, and all other Devilisms." When the new series of the Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review began in January, 1830, a different tone became apparent. The editor declared that the periodical would now be open to the "vindication not only of the doctrines, but of the institutions, discipline, and polity, of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

Methodist scholars arose who could answer the Calvinists. President Wilbur Fisk of Wesleyan University in 1837 replied to them in a book entitled "The Calvinistic Controversy." When the Presbyterians of Ohio began in 1840 to circulate "Annan's Difficulties of Arminian Methodism," the Methodists countered by distributing a controversial work, "The Dagon of Calvinism." The Methodists coined the amusing definition of Calvinism: "If you seek religion, you can't find it. If you find it, you won't know it. If you don't know it you have got it; and if you have got it you can't lose it; and if you lose it, you never had it." Many of the debates with the Calvinists ended as did the one at Reading, Connecticut, where the Methodist cause was defended by Jesse Lee. It is related that on the day after the debate, a tinker came to Reading in search of work. He was informed that there was not much broken ware there, but if he "could mend the Saybrook Platform, in which a Methodist preacher had knocked a sad hole, he might realize a good price for his services."

Many were the public debates between the Methodists and Baptists prior to the Civil War. Typical topics of

discussion were: "Who are the proper subjects for Christian baptism? What is the Scriptural mode?" Some of the arguments reached the witty and sarcastic stage. George Harmon always demanded that his Baptist opponents explain who baptized John the Baptist. Peter Cartwright's interrogation on the question of infant baptism was: "If there are no children in hell, and all young children who die go to heaven, is not the church which has no children in it more like hell than heaven?"

The insults heaped upon Methodism by J. R. Graves did not go unanswered. William G. Brownlow, in "The Great Iron Wheel Examined," proved himself able to cope with Graves, both as to argument, and (although not to the credit of Brownlow) to scurrilous remarks. One of Brownlow's statements was: "I propose to show that Graves has perpetrated TWENTY-FIVE FALSEHOODS in one chapter of his book, a short chapter at that, composed of only twelve pages, making more than two lies to a page." Of Graves he wrote: "For several years past, in portions of several States with unearthly din, this man has been barking, neighing, braying, mewing, puffing, swaggering, strutting; and in every situation an offensive smell, to gentlemen of refined tastes and Christian habits has gone with him!" The Graves-Brownlow controversy was the acme of all Methodist-Baptist quarrels. At the close of it the leaders of both denominations were ashamed of the spirit exhibited. Needless to say, however, no man during the lifetime of Brownlow ever again adopted Graves' method of attack.

Methodism also replied to the other opponents. In 1820 Nathan Bangs answered the Protestant Episcopal Church in his "Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy."




William Phillips countered the Campbellites in "Campbellism Exposed; or Strictures on the Peculiar Tenets of Alexander Campbell." In a debate at Dunkirk, New York, the Methodist preachers so routed their Universalist opponents on the subject of future punishment, that one of the Universalist debaters upon departing was heard to remark that if there were no hell there ought to be one for the Methodists.

Modern Methodists regret that there ever had to be controversy between the evangelical denominations of America. The early Methodists, however, did not start the quarrels, but on the other hand they did not evade the issues when forced upon them. The attacks upon Methodism, however, proved to be a blessing in disguise. The great debates, and the controversial literature helped to advertise Methodism and to make known the correct views of Methodism as to doctrine and polity. The Methodists themselves became better informed as to their distinctive beliefs and practices. Methodism continued to grow in numbers and power during the entire period of denominational controversy.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

#### § 1. COKESBURY COLLEGE: A MEMORY

 OHN WESLEY, the founder of Methodism, was not only an educated man but he also believed in the training of the masses. He did not agree with the current opinion of eighteenth century England that it was a bad policy to educate the poor people. Wesley, furthermore was convinced that lofty spiritual life was incompatible with ignorance. It was that reason that caused Wesley twelve months after his heart had been "strangely warmed" to lay the cornerstone at Kingswood, England, for the first Methodist educational institution in the world. Once when Wesley was asked what would become of Methodism after his death, he answered, "That will depend on the education and religious instruction of the children of the Methodists." On another occasion he declared in immortal words: "The Methodists may be poor, but there is no need they should be ignorant."

Wesley's greatest disciple, Francis Asbury, was the first champion of Methodist education in America. Such an attitude on his part was very singular because Asbury himself never attended school beyond the thirteenth year of his life. Of his early training Asbury remarked: "My master by his severity, had filled me with such horrible dread, that with me anything was preferable to going to school." By private study, however, Asbury overcame the educational deficiencies of his youth and became a learned man. Before his death he had mastered

the Greek and Hebrew languages. Duren says of him: "His Journal shows an amazing range of study, covering practically the whole field of literature, and scientific investigation of that day. History, biography, science, theology, sermon literature and physics are included in his list; and his observations show that he was not just a casual reader." In order to be better acquainted with educational methods, Asbury made a study of the Quaker and Moravian schools in Pennsylvania, and consulted with Presbyterian educational leaders concerning their programs.

Even before the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Asbury as a humble itinerant had taken steps toward founding a Methodist educational institution in America. In 1780 while visiting on the Roanoke circuit in North Carolina, Asbury, with the aid of John Dickins, drafted plans for a Methodist school. On July 19, 1780 he wrote in his journal: "Brother Dickins drew the subscription for a Kingswood school in America;—Gabriel Long and brother Bustion were the first subscribers, which I hope will be for the glory of God and good of thousands." This first project for an educational institution never materialized, but Asbury's action presaged future accomplishments.

The arrival in America of Dr. Thomas Coke gave an impetus to Methodist educational endeavor. Coke, a graduate of Oxford University, had lofty ambitions for the creation of a great Methodist college in America. Although Asbury favored the founding first of secondary schools, yet, he coöperated with Coke on this larger project. When the ministers assembled at Baltimore for the Christmas Conference, Coke and Asbury had already

drafted plans for the college and had secured some contributions.

The preachers who organized the Methodist Episcopal Church supported the educational proposal of the two superintendents. On New Year's Day, 1785, it was voted that a college should be erected and in addition those sixty itinerants at the Christmas Conference, whose salaries were not more than sixty-four dollars a year without traveling expenses, subscribed five thousand dollars towards the support of the proposed institution. Because one-third of all the American Methodists lived in Maryland, it was decided that the college should be located at Abingdon, Maryland. The institution was given the name of Cokesbury, in recognition of the interest shown by Coke and Asbury.

The building of Cokesbury College began immediately after the Christmas Conference. On June 5, 1785, Bishop Asbury preached the sermon at the laying of the cornerstone. He wrote in his journal: "I stood on the ground where the building is to be erected, warm as it was, and spoke from Psalms lxxviii, 4-8. I had liberty in speaking, and faith to believe the work would go on." When the building was only partially completed a preparatory school was started. On December 8, 1787, the college was formally opened with three professors and twenty-five students. In 1791 the enrollment had increased to seventy. The General Assembly of Maryland gave Cokesbury College a charter permitting it to confer such degrees "as are common to England and America."

The Methodists chose an excellent site for their first college. After visiting Abingdon for the second time Bishop Coke wrote: "The place delights me more than

ever. There is not I believe, a point on it, from which the eye has not a view of at least twenty miles, and in some parts, the prospect extends to fifty miles in length. The water part forms one of the most beautiful views in the United States; the Chesapeake bay in all its grandeur with a fine navigable river, the Susquehanna, which empties into it, lying exposed to view through a great extent of country." The three story building that overlooked this beautiful scene was described as "in dimension and style of architecture fully equal, if not superior, to anything of the kind in the country. It was one hundred feet in length and forty feet in width. Forty-thousand dollars, the greater part of which had been solicited by Coke and Asbury, was expended in its erection.

Lofty aims dominated the educational program of the pioneer Methodists. This is seen in the advertisements prepared by Coke and Asbury for Cokesbury College. Among the classes of students to be received were poor orphans, ministerial students, and the sons of Methodist ministers. Cokesbury existed primarily to train the students along religious lines. "But our first object," stated Coke and Asbury, "shall be, to answer the design of Christian education, by forming the minds of the youth, through divine aid, to wisdom and holiness, by instilling into their tender minds the principles of true religion, speculative, experimental and practical, and training them in the ancient way, that they may be rational, Scriptural Christians."

Spartan discipline was adopted at Cokesbury. Games and amusements were forbidden. Rule 18 stated: "the students shall not be indulged with nothing which the world calls play. Let this rule be observed with the strictest

nicety; for those who play when they are young, will play when they are old." The following regulations show that work and study were to substitute for play at Cokesbury:

"1. The students shall rise at five o'clock in the morning, summer and winter, at the ringing of the college bell.

2. All the students, whether they lodge in or out of the college, shall assemble together in the college at six o'clock, for public prayer—

3. From the morning prayer till seven they shall be allowed to recreate themselves, as is hereafter directed.

4. At seven they shall breakfast.

5. From eight till twelve they are to be closely kept to their respective studies.

6. From twelve to three they are to employ themselves in recreation and dining—dinner to be ready at one o'clock.

7. From three to six they are again to be kept closely to their studies.

8. At six they shall sup.

9. At seven there shall be public prayer.

10. From evening prayer till bed-time they shall be allowed recreation.

11. They shall all be in bed at nine o'clock, without fail.

12. Their recreations shall be gardening, walking, riding, and bathing without doors; and the carpenter's, joiner's, cabinet maker's, or turner's business, within doors."

Despite the hopes of the bishops it must be admitted that the Methodist attempt at higher education at Cokesbury proved a failure. The college was involved in

trouble from the very beginning. A mistake was made in the selection of the first faculty. On August 10, 1788, Asbury wrote in his journal: "I received heavy tidings from the college—both of our teachers have left; one for incompetency, and the other to pursue riches and honours: had they cost us nothing, the mistake we made in employing them might be the less regretted." After a visit to Cokesbury in 1792 Asbury declared: "All is not well here."

Financial difficulties arose. That is not surprising since all poor boys were taught and boarded free of charge. Clothes were furnished gratis to some of them. In 1793 the college was \$2,500 in debt. One year later the indebtedness of Cokesbury was \$5,000. By 1794 the situation there became so critical that it was found necessary to close the college department and maintain only an English free-day school.

The death blow to Cokesbury, however, came on December 7, 1795, when the building was burned to the ground. The fire, supposed to have been of incendiary origin, destroyed everything. Furthermore, since no insurance had been placed on the college, there was no basis for any financial redress. The fire was a severe blow to the Methodists. The labors and sacrifices of ten years appeared to have been in vain. When Bishop Asbury heard in Charleston, South Carolina, of the destruction of Cokesbury, he gave vent to his feelings. "We have now" he wrote, "a second and confirmed account that Cokesbury college is consumed to ashes, a sacrifice of £10,000 (\$50,000) in about ten years!—would any man give me £10,000 per year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it. The Lord called not

Mr. Whitefield nor the Methodists to build colleges. I wished only for schools—Doctor Coke wanted a college. I feel distressed at the loss of the library.”

“The Lord called not—the Methodists to build colleges!” Would the hope of Methodist education be buried in the ashes of Cokesbury? Would the pessimism of the discouraged bishop permeate the entire Church? Would the Methodists be satisfied with only academies? The many Methodist colleges and universities in twentieth century America bear witness to the fact that the fiasco at Cokesbury did not daunt the educational ambitions of Methodism.

## § 2. AFTER COKESBURY

After the failure of Cokesbury College Methodism turned its attention to the building of academies, for as Bishop Asbury had explained, he wanted “schools” not “colleges.” Asbury realized that the first generation of American Methodists were unable to support colleges; that elementary and secondary schools would far better fill their educational needs. Until his death therefore Asbury invested time and energy in the erection of institutions which did not aspire to be colleges. Cokesbury School in North Carolina, Ebenezer Academy in Brunswick county, Virginia, Bethel School in Kentucky, Union School in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and Bethel Academy in Newberry county, South Carolina, were started through the efforts of Asbury. Some of these schools had been projected even before the destruction of Cokesbury College. Asbury organized many other academies but they existed for such short periods of time that their names are found only in Asbury’s journal. One his-



torian has characterized Asbury as the first "Commissioner of Education in the United States" since he founded one or more elementary or secondary schools in each Methodist annual conference.

The educational efforts of Asbury however produced very few lasting results. Asbury found it as difficult to manage academies as it had been to supervise Cokesbury College. Not a single one of Asbury's schools became a permanent institution. Many were the factors that account for this. The majority of the first generation of Methodist laymen did not realize the need of schools while many of the itinerants stressed conversion and sanctification at the expense of education. A great mistake was also made in locating the schools. In order to shield the students from the temptations of crowded centers, the academies were built in out-of-way places. The result was that there was no local population to support the institutions. The financial factor however was the most serious handicap. "We have the poor" declared Asbury, "but they have no money; and the worldly, wicked rich we do not choose to ask."

Cokesbury College burned and Asbury's academies gradually disappeared but a spark of educational ambition always remained among the Methodists. "No failures, however, no discouragements," says Stevens, "could obliterate from the mind of the denomination the conviction of the responsibility for the education of the increasing masses of its people." There were always some leaders who stayed loyal to that educational injunction of Wesley: "The Methodists may be poor but there is no need they should be ignorant."

The poverty of the first generation of Methodists was

only temporary. Soon wealthy members were found in the Church. When the Methodists, however, became financially able to educate their children, they discovered that practically all the colleges were under the control of the Calvinists. That presented a serious problem because a Methodist student in a Calvinistic institution was in danger of either being proselyted or derided. The Methodists, therefore, faced the alternative of seeing their children leave the Methodist fold, or of establishing colleges of their own.

In 1820 the Methodist Episcopal Church took a step which resulted in the founding of the historic schools of American Methodist; institutions, many of which are still in existence. One action of the General Conference of 1820 regarding education was to change the Discipline so that the bishops could appoint traveling preachers as officers and teachers in the colleges. Up to that time the Church frowned upon a preacher leaving the itinerancy to engage in educational work. Another move of far reaching importance was the decision of the General Conference of 1820 that Methodist education should be controlled by the various annual conferences. Instead of having colleges supervised by the entire Church, the General Conference advised that all the annual conferences "establish as soon as practicable, literary institutions, under their own control, in such a way and manner as they may think proper."

The majority of the annual conferences heeded the advice of the General Conference of 1820. During the next twenty years there occurred the great college building era of American Methodism. The first college to be chartered under the legislation of 1820 was Augusta Col-

lege, which began in 1822 under the control of the Kentucky Conference. The Pittsburg Conference organized Madison College in 1827. In 1828 McKendree College was started at Lebanon, Illinois and in 1830 the Virginia Methodists established Randolph-Macon College. The New England Methodists founded Wesleyan University in 1831. In 1833 Dickinson College at Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Allegheny College at Meadville, Pennsylvania, came under the supervision of the Methodists. Emory College at Oxford, Georgia, began in 1836. Emory and Henry College was founded in 1839. According to Duvall, the Methodists had by 1870 founded nearly three hundred schools and colleges.

The founders of these colleges were men who dreamed dreams and saw visions. They had great faith in the future of their institutions. In 1841 a committee representing the Ohio Methodists went to Delaware, Ohio, to inspect property which had been offered to the Methodists for a college. The members of the committee were so poor that only one of them had money enough to pay the carriage rental, yet their enthusiasm was not dampened. Charles Elliott, the spokesman for the committee, informed the citizens of Delaware that the Methodists would erect there an institution of more than ordinary grade. "Yes, gentlemen," said Elliott, "we will bring New Haven here, even something greater than New Haven." In 1849 the officials of Ohio Wesleyan University were so enthusiastic that they sold scholarships amounting in all to 25,000 years of free tuition.

It should also be remembered that many Methodist colleges are in existence today only because of the support of the early circuit riders. The free tuition given

by the schools to sons of preachers was a wise investment. Many ministers stinted themselves in order to help their conference educational institution. At the Rock River Conference of 1840 twenty-five preachers gave one hundred dollars each to the Rock River Seminary. McKendree College was kept in existence one year because a presiding elder traveled through his district begging food for the faculty and students. An example of the work of the ministers is seen in a letter Peter Cartwright sent on June 24, 1847, to the president of McKendree College. Cartwright wrote: "After toiling hard, begging and complaining long and loud to the scattered remnants of the Bloomington District, I have collected five dollars more for the support of the professors in 'old M'Kendree' and I inclose it in this scrawl, but I confess I am heartily ashamed of the little pitiful sum, and I am determined to keep the subject before the Church, and will 'torment them before the time.' "

Honor is due the presidents and teachers of those early institutions. It was not a sinecure to be a professor in one of the pioneer Methodist colleges. The salaries were extremely low and the teachers were not always paid in full. Henry B. Bascom as professor of Augusta College received during six academic sessions only one-fifth of his salary in money. For a number of years President Robert Paine of LaGrange College contributed more than half his salary in order to keep the college alive. In 1844 the president of Ohio Wesleyan University received \$400 a year. Yet those noble men remained loyal to their denominational schools. Wilbur Fisk once was offered a large financial inducement to become professor at the University of Alabama. Although his salary at

Wesleyan University was very small, Fisk declined the invitation, saying it "would build up Wilbur Fisk, but it would not build up Methodism." Braxton Craven, when president of Trinity College, was offered an excellent position by the Federal Government. He replied: "I would rather stay at Trinity and make men than go to Washington and make money."

Various types of persons aided those early Methodist colleges. Laymen who had never attended a secondary school were taught to contribute their small mite. Some of the pioneer trustees were a queer lot. Charles F. Deems relates that when he asked Moses Brock if he were a trustee of Randolph-Macon College, the latter replied that he had been but that he had resigned. Brock's reason for retirement was that when "the chief duty of a trustee was to carry a surveyor's chain around the old fields in Mecklenburg County to stake out the campus of a college, he felt himself sufficiently endowed by nature and grace for a duty of that sort; but when they called upon him to sign his name to a Latin diploma he felt that common honesty compelled him to resign his trusteeship."

When the Methodists began to build colleges they did not overlook the education of women. In this field the Methodists were pioneers. A Methodist institution, Elizabeth Female Academy at Washington, Mississippi, was the first school for the education of women in the Southern States. It was chartered by the legislature of Mississippi in 1819. Of far greater importance, however, was the founding in 1836 of the Wesleyan Female College at Macon, Georgia. It had the unique distinction of being the first woman's college in the world that granted the

degree of Bachelor of Arts. When Catherine E. Brewer received her diploma on July 18, 1840, "she little realized at that moment that she was the first woman in all the wide world to be graduated from the first college for women and to receive the first diploma, but such was the case."

Strictness of discipline was an outstanding characteristic of those Methodist schools for women. The rules enforced at Elizabeth Female Academy sound strange to the modern girl. The following regulations are typical:

- "2. No pupil shall be permitted to receive ceremonious visits.
4. All boarders in common shall wear a plain dress and uniform bonnets.
5. No pupil shall be permitted to wear beads, jewelry, artificial flowers, curls, feathers or any superfluous decorations.
6. No pupils shall be allowed to attend balls, dancing parties, theatrical performances or festive entertainments."

Vital religion held first place in the pioneer Methodist colleges. The educational leaders of the second generation of Methodism retained the viewpoint of Bishop Coke and Bishop Asbury that the objective of education was to produce rational, Scriptural Christians. Chapel exercises played a prominent part in the activities of each day. Religious revivals were annual events. The majority of the faculty members were ordained ministers. The colleges proudly advertised the number of ministerial students enrolled. From 1833 to 1873 one-third of the graduates of Wesleyan University became preachers in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1844

the Western Christian Advocate could write thus concerning Indiana Asbury College: "The moral influence is so strong that most wild boys who go there are naturally awed into a sober deportment by the silent, yet efficacious religious and moral influence which surrounds them from the faculty and sober students."

### § 3. PIONEER SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The preachers who organized the Methodist Episcopal Church did not overlook the religious training of children. "But what shall we do for the rising generation?" was one question placed in the Discipline of 1784. The answer in part was, "1. Where there are ten children who parents are in society, meet them at least an hour every week; 2. Talk with them every time you see any at home; 3. Pray in earnest for them. 4. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses."

It is not strange that such action was taken at the Christmas Conference. In England John Wesley required all his helpers to give especial attention to the religious education of the children. He had been outspoken in the championship of the Sunday school movement started by Robert Raikes. He described it as one of the greatest forces for the growth of the Kingdom. Because the early English Methodists, put so much energy into the Sunday school program, they were accused by their enemies of using these schools for the purpose of proselyting.

Bishop Francis Asbury carried Wesley's policy to the New World. In fact, he organized the first modern Sunday school in America. While Asbury in 1786 was visiting at the home of Thomas Crenshaw in Hanover county, Vir-

ginia, he started what has been described as "the first Sunday school proper on the American continent." Although it is difficult to secure much data concerning this school, it is thought that the first session was held in Crenshaw's kitchen. The children of the neighborhood were the pupils at that historic gathering. Hurlbut, in describing the scene says: "To my eyes Bishop Asbury in that hall, with the little ones around him, is greater and nobler than when a few years later he stood before General Washington bearing the greetings and pledging the prayers of the infant church."

In 1790 the term Sunday school was officially used for the first time by the American Methodists. In the minutes of the conferences of that year there was inserted this question: "What can be done to instruct poor children, white and black, to read?" The answer in part was, "Let us labor, as the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday-schools in or near every place of public worship. . . ." That was a great resolve for a church which consisted then of only 227 ministers and 57,631 laymen. By this legislation the Methodists won the honor of being the first ecclesiastical body in America to officially recognize the Sunday school.

The Methodist Sunday school movement, launched in 1790, was in the experimental stage for many years. There were many interesting characteristics in the early religious education program of the Church. For example, the teaching of reading and writing held an important place in most of the pioneer schools. In this respect the Methodists rendered a great service, for many of the people with whom they worked were illiterate. The circuit riders and their helpers gave to the frontiersmen the rudi-



ments of learning long before the coming of the public school system.

The Sunday schools, however, did not exist only for training along secular lines. The circuit riders united religion and erudition. The following description of Jesse Walker's school at St. Louis, as given by one of his pupils, exemplifies this fact: "The school was opened by singing a verse of the hymn, 'Children of the Heavenly King,' then a short prayer. Father Walker examined each scholar to see how much they knew in letters. He found five who did not know their A B C's; the other five could read a little. Father Walker then gave to each boy who could read one who could not, thus forming them into classes, one teaching the other his A B C's. While they were thus engaged, Father Walker called first one and another of those who could read and gave to each of them a short lesson of instruction and advice on religious subjects. . . . He then made them a short address on religious subjects, sang a verse of the hymn, 'Jesus my all to heaven is gone.' Then a short prayer and we were dismissed with the benediction."

There were of course many differences between the pioneer Sunday schools and those of today. "Crude" is a hard but apt description of the early Methodist Sunday schools. For many years the Bible was the only textbook. It served as a quarterly, a primer, and a spelling book. Memorizing of the Scriptures was a prominent part of the Sunday school work. Beardsley in describing the first Methodist Sabbath school which he attended said: "That Sunday school had neither lesson-leaf, journal, paper or 'help' of any kind. . . . The larger scholars were required to commit seven verses of the first chapter for a lesson. These were recited in turn by each

scholar to the teacher, who made no comments, and that ended the lesson." There were no religious education buildings in the pioneer period. The sessions of the schools were held in groves, in cabins, or in the crude Bethels of early Methodism.

In this day of abbreviated Sunday school periods, it is interesting to note the length of the sessions in the first Methodist schools. The legislation of 1790 directed that the schools should be in session from six A. M. till ten A. M. and from two P. M. to six P. M. Although it is difficult to believe that such a schedule was enforced or that children would submit to such an arrangement, yet in 1843 a quarterly conference in North Carolina protested against this requirement. The conference declared that "on ordinary occasions the Sunday school shall not remain in session above three hours, for we are fully convinced that where weariness commences instruction ceases and many of our schools have been injured by being kept in session from morning until evening."

Not all Methodists, however, favored the Sunday school. The arguments used against it sound strange today. It was felt by many that such gatherings would desecrate the Sabbath. In 1822 there was placed over the door of the Methodist church in Nashville, Tennessee, a large placard with the inscription, "NO DESECRATION OF THE HOLY SABBATH, BY TEACHING ON THE SABBATH IN THIS CHURCH." McFerrin says concerning the first Sunday school work in Nashville: "We were called Sabbath-breakers, and violators of the law of the land and that we deserved punishment as disturbers of the peace. The finger of scorn was hurled at us on all occasions, and all

the churches pronounced against us, declaring that we should not be countenanced."

Many circuit riders, although instructed by the Discipline to give attention to the promotion of Sunday schools neglected to do so. The teaching of children did not appeal to the majority of the pioneer Methodist ministers. They were more interested in preaching the gospel to the adults. Many felt that Sunday schools were of doubtful value to the Church. At the Erie Conference of 1837 the young preachers proposed that a conference Sunday school committee be appointed. One presiding elder thereupon stated the viewpoint of the older members when he objected to the motion, and said, "Mr. President, I hope the conference will proceed with its legitimate business and not stop to consider any more outside subjects until we get through with our proper conference work, and see if any time is left for other subjects." In 1826, Luther Lee, a local preacher, organized a Sunday school at Victory, New York. George Gary, the minister of the circuit, thereupon preferred charges against Lee to the presiding elder. Gary argued that the Sunday school work was of too small importance to justify Lee in neglecting to preach on the Sabbath. He insisted that Lee's duty as a local preacher did not include the teaching of children.

The real reason for the opposition of some circuit riders to the Sunday school movement was their belief that the saving of souls could be done only by the revival methods. They questioned whether a genuine Methodist experience could come through the Sunday school program. The laymen also did not expect their spiritual leaders to stress religious education; they preferred pulpit oratory. In 1857 J. D. Long of the Philadelphia

Annual Conference expressed a popular opinion when he wrote: "The pastor who tries to get up Sunday-schools and Bible classes, is frequently considered a 'dry-stick.' But he who cares little for these things, but can shout and ejaculate 'Glory'—he who beats the Bible and stamps lustily in the pulpit, is supposed by many to be full of the Holy Ghost. I have always found it easier to get up a 'shout' than a Bible class." It is estimated that at least nine-tenth of the American Methodists in 1845 had been won by the revival methods.

The Sunday school movement, however, made progress in the face of opposition and the seeming inactivity of many of the preachers. April 2, 1827 is an important date for the religious education program of American Methodism, for it marks the founding of the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The creation of this organization represents the turning point in the Methodist Sunday school movement. Training along secular lines was henceforth to receive less attention. The purpose of the Union was "to aid in the instruction of the rising generation, particularly in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and in the service and worship of God."

Much conference legislation favoring the Sunday schools followed immediately after the founding of the Union. The church and the Sunday school were brought into closer coöperation. In 1828 it was made the "duty of every preacher of a circuit or station to form Sunday schools." Previous to that date they were required only to encourage the schools. In 1832 the ministers for the first time were instructed to make statistical reports regarding the schools on their circuits. The General Conference of 1840 recommended that agents be appointed in

each annual conference "for the purpose of promoting the interests of the Sunday schools." In that same year the Sunday schools were placed under the supervision of the quarterly conferences. It was not until the Civil War that the Methodists began to recognize adults as Sunday school scholars. In 1860 the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church were required to "found Bible classes for the larger children, youths, and adults."

Sunday school literature came into use after the organization of the Sunday School Union. In 1846 the Methodist Book Concern printed 79,716,000 pages of Sunday school literature and issued 85,000 copies of the Sunday School Advocate. It is estimated that in 1860 there were 514,890 volumes in the Sunday school libraries of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Such periodicals as the "Sunday School Messenger," "Youth's Magazine" and "Sunday School Advocate" became popular in Methodist circles.

When Bishop Asbury gathered those children into Thomas Crenshaw's home for religious instruction, he was starting a movement in American Methodism that became, despite much opposition, a vital factor in the evangelization of America. Fifty years after the death of Bishop Asbury the Methodist Sunday school program had assumed large proportions. In 1865 when the combined enrollment of the Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed Sunday schools was 1,149,008 there were 1,518,519 scholars in all branches of American Methodism. The Methodists had answered better than had any other denomination the question of 1784: "But what shall we do for the rising generation?"

## § 4. THE PRINTED PAGE

Methodism has always believed in the use of the printed page as an aid to religion. John Wesley set the example. As early as 1738 he began to furnish religious literature at a low cost to the people of England. Wesley established a Book Room in the Foundry, the first Methodist church in the world. During his life Wesley gave to the press from his own pen more than three hundred and seventy-one publications. He veritably flooded England with good literature.

It is not surprising then that the first Methodist preachers in America used the printed page in their missionary work. Robert Williams, who came to the New World in 1769 began at once to reprint many of Wesley's books and sermons and had them spread through the country "to the great advantage of religion." Jesse Lee declared that Williams' publications "opened the way in many places for our preachers to be invited to preach where they had never been before."

The number of Williams' publications is not known, but by the year 1773 when the first conference of Methodist preachers was held in America, the work had reached such large proportions that the other preachers felt that some uniform policy should be taken in regard to the printing of Methodist books. It was contended that the profits from the sale of Methodist literature should not be for any one individual. It was further argued that without supervision, some preachers might publish books under the Methodist name that would discredit the Wesleyan movement. The following items are therefore found in the minutes of that meeting:

“4. None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley’s books, without his authority (when it can be gotten) and the consent of their brethren.

5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more, unless under the above restriction.”

From 1773 to 1789 the preachers at their annual conferences approved the publication of certain books, minutes, and hymnals, but there was always the feeling that there should be some official publishing house for the Church; that such important work could not be handled in the existing haphazard manner. At the conference held in John Street Church, New York, in May, 1789, the preachers decided that the time had come for some definite action. Accordingly the twenty-five preachers there resolved that a printing house should be established for “publication and circulation of religious books.” The conference, however, had no money with which to enter the publishing field, and when it seemed therefore that the plan would have to be abandoned, one of the preachers arose and said: “Brethren, be of good courage; I have six hundred dollars, the savings of my life’s labors. I will lend it all to the Conference for the beginning of this work.” The speaker was John Dickins, a graduate of Eton. He has been described as the most literary of all the early Methodist preachers. The conference gladly accepted his offer and perhaps as a token of gratitude the preachers selected Dickins to be the first Book Steward of American Methodism.

Dickins began with vigor his new work. In the summer of 1789 he opened in the basement of a rented house at 43 Fourth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the

Methodist Book Concern. On August 17, 1789, Dickins placed upon the ledger the first business transaction of the Book Concern. The Church was too poor to have a printing press, so Dickins was forced to have the books printed on a contract basis. The first book released was Wesley's translation of "Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis. Before the close of the first year Dickins had issued a volume of the *Arminian Magazine*, the *Methodist Discipline*, Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest," a hymn book and Wesley's "Primitive Physic." The first catalogue of the Book Concern, issued in 1793, was a single leaf, six and one-half inches long by three and three-fourth inches wide. Twenty-eight books and pamphlets were listed.

It was a struggle to keep the Book Concern alive. Bishop Andrew once remarked that "Book Concern" was a very fitting title for the publishing house because it certainly gave the Methodists enough concern. The American Methodist leaders were too busy making history to write books. During those early years, as Bangs says, there was "scarcely a single writer on this side of the water, who dared to put his pen to the paper." Most of the publications of the Book Concern were reprints of English works. The Book Concern furthermore, since it paid in cash for printing and sold its books on credit soon became involved in debt. Sanford Hunt, in commenting upon the transfer of the Book Concern in 1804 to New York, says: "If Philadelphia dismissed the Book Concern without tears of regret we do not learn that any jubilee of welcome greeted its advent in New York." During the first twenty years of its existence in New York the Book Concern moved its location seven different times.



John Dickins deserves the praise of Methodism for his pioneer work. Until his death in 1798 he was the guiding genius of the Book Concern. During those ten years he furnished the American Methodists with thousands of books and pamphlets. For his labors he received a meager remuneration. In 1792 his salary was:

“1. Two hundred dollars for a dwelling house and for a book room.

2. Eighty dollars for a boy.

3. Fifty-three dollars and one-third for firewood; and

4. Three hundred and thirty-three dollars to clothe and feed himself, his wife and his children. In all, six hundred and sixty-six dollars and one-third.”

The Book Concern was fortunate in one respect; it had plenty of salesmen. The General Conference of 1792 made it the duty of the presiding elder to supply his district with books. The ministers were instructed to do the same for their circuits. For this service the presiding elders and preachers were to receive a small commission on each sale.

The pioneer presiding elders and circuit riders obeyed these disciplinary instructions. They sold books to the people, even if it was often a very embarrassing and unthankful task. Methodist literature filled a large part of the saddle-bags of the circuit riders. Charles Pitman, a presiding elder in New Jersey is known to have sold in his district in one year books valued at thirteen hundred dollars. It is estimated that between 1824-1854 the Methodist preachers placed in the territory of Holston Conference books to the value of \$150,000. It has truly been said: “Had it not been for the itinerant saddle-bags the Book Concern might have been still in the Crosby-street shanty, not having stock enough to load a hand cart.”

As agents of the Book Concern, the preachers often became involved in financial difficulties. This was due largely to the fact that the Book Concern sold its publications on credit. In like manner the preachers allowed the people months in which to pay for the books. At the close of the conference year, however, some people were unable to pay, others had "forgotten" that they had purchased the books, and the preachers often did not dare to press the claim. Some members after having read a book decided they did not want it, and would return to the circuit rider a torn and unsalable copy. The preacher from his meager salary could not make good such losses, and accordingly the debt of the Book Concern increased each year. In 1801 Bishop Asbury wrote to Ezekiel Cooper, the superintendent of the Book Concern, that "we will do what little we can to collect for you, but we might as well climb up to the moon as attempt to get some of those debts." The Book Concern came to realize that the credit system was not practicable. It was abolished in 1836.

The profits of the Book Concern were given to the Church. The Discipline of 1787 stated that all the profits from the sale of books were to be applied "according to the discretion of the conference, toward the college, the preachers' fund, the deficiencies of the preachers, the distant missions, or the debts on our churches." In 1804 the conferences were allowed to draw on the Book Concern for at least \$100 annually. The amount was often much larger. For example, in 1835 the Mississippi Annual Conference was granted the sum of \$800. In 1824 the Book Concern was ordered by the General Conference to pay the salaries and traveling expenses of the bishops. It would have been a dark day indeed for the superannu-

ated preachers and the widows and orphans of the deceased itinerants if there had been no Book Concern.

The Methodist Episcopal Church also became interested in the publication of religious magazines and periodicals. Although two attempts were made to publish the Arminian Magazine it was not until 1818 that the Church was able to boast of a religious magazine. The Methodist Magazine began in January, 1818, as a monthly periodical. It was later changed to a quarterly, and at the present time exists as a bi-monthly magazine of the Methodist Episcopal Church. On September 9, 1826, there was published at New York the Christian Advocate, the first official weekly periodical of the Church.

The modern Methodist publishing agent or editor hardly realizes the problems that faced his predecessors. Literary men were not so plentiful in pioneer Methodism. Editors called in vain for contributions. Henry B. Bascom as editor of the Southern Methodist Quarterly Review declared in 1847 that only one in seven who promised contributions lived up to their promises. Matthew Simpson, while editor of the Western Christian Advocate, put in one issue these words: "We have but little original matter in this week's paper, and we have no supply for our next issue except obituary notices." The pioneer editor was also a business manager. He was expected to keep the records, secure new subscribers, and prepare books and pamphlets for distribution. William Capers after serving three years as the editor of the Southern Christian Advocate declared that his editorship had been a "furnace of insufferable fires." He further stated: "How could I be willing to pass what of life remains to me in the perpetual irritations of the last three years? I would

rather wander through the earth on foot, preaching Christ, than be the editor of a religious newspaper."

Dickins and his successors had to face many difficulties in the publication work, but they rendered a great service. The Methodist press was of inestimable value as a means of defending the faith. From the books, pamphlets and periodicals the laymen became acquainted with the theology, history, government, and doctrines of Methodism. There were very few loyal Methodist homes that did not possess some Methodist literature. Furthermore the early periodicals were agencies for experimental religion. They gave more than information. Fitzgerald says: "The reading of the early Methodist periodicals was like attending a class-meeting or love-feast. In their pages the holiest and wisest men and women of Methodism told what the Lord had done for their souls, and discoursed of the deep things of God with wonderful clearness and force. Light and life were in their words."

The faith of the Methodists in their publication interests was shown in 1836, when the Book Concern in New York City was destroyed by fire. In a surprisingly short time the sum of \$95,281.30 was given for the restitution of the building. Non-Methodists also contributed. At a meeting held in New York for the raising of funds for the Book Concern, a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church arose and spoke thus: "I have lived heretofore in the new countries; and I remember the time when the people who dwelt in their log cabins had no other books to read but such as they obtained from Methodist itinerants, who carried them around their circuits in their saddle-bags, and after preaching sold them to the people. In this humble way the people in the wilderness were sup-

plied both with the living word from the lips of God's messengers, and with reading matter for their meditation by the fire-side when the living teacher had taken his departure. Therefore put me down one thousand dollars to help rebuild the Methodist Book Room."

## CHAPTER IX

# TRAINING THE PREACHERS

### § 1. THE FIRST GENERATION



THE Methodist circuit riders entered the itinerancy because they felt called by the voice of God to proclaim the great message of salvation. "The Lord called me to preach, and I went," declared Joshua Soule. Those early Methodist preachers felt that a dispensation of the gospel had been committed unto them. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" was their sincere belief. A sense of grave responsibility rested upon them. The members of the Western Conference in 1805 declared that they lived in an age "in which there is great need to cry aloud, and spare not—." With such convictions it is easy to see why those early Methodist circuit riders were a singular group of preachers.

The circuit riders did not use prayer books; did not read sermons; and did not follow notes. Such homiletical aids were not necessary for the men who were overflowing with a great message. John Wesley in 1784 prepared a liturgy for the American Methodists, but it was soon discarded because the preachers would not be bound by formal prayers. S. R. Beggs traveled nine years in the itinerancy before he saw a Methodist preacher using notes while preaching. During his probation period Henry B. Bascom was criticised severely by the older preachers because he memorized his sermons. Largely because they were not hampered by prayer books and manuscripts, the circuit riders fitted into the life of the frontier. Peter Cartwright explained this when he wrote that, "the great mass of our

Western people wanted a preacher that could mount a stump, a block, or old log, or stand in the bed of a wagon and, without note or manuscript, quote, expound and apply the word of God to the hearts and consciences of the people."

Those early preachers put their souls into each sermon. They did not deliver dull addresses. The hands and the feet were used to emphasize important points. People knew that the exhortation came from the depth of the preacher's heart. During the sermon tears would often roll from the minister's eyes. It is told that William Winans preached with such power that at the close of his discourse his handkerchief would be stained with blood. Listeners did not fall asleep under this type of preaching. A Frenchman who belonged to the Presbyterian Church once gave the following reason to a Methodist preacher for not attending his services: "Me go to my church, me go to sleep; me go to hear you, me no sleep; you make too much noise!"

The circuit riders spoke from a background of personal experience. They were men whose hearts had been strangely warmed. "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me," was one of their unchangeable convictions. They could proclaim salvation to others because they had experienced it in their own lives. One of the pioneer ministers used to say, "I simply told the story of the undying love of Jesus and related my own experience of salvation through Christ, and as I did so I cried and other men cried, and were converted."

Methodist ministers of the early nineteenth century used a simple language which was easily understood by the worshippers. They did not burden their sermons with

high-sounding theological terms, but talked with directness and made use of plain illustrations. A Methodist preacher of Indiana in order to show his congregation the folly of serving the devil used this metaphor: "And if you are seeking for wealth, the devil has none of it; if you were to sweep hell from one end to the other, you would not get a sixpence." Stirred by the plainness of this illustration one uneducated listener, sitting before the minister, with eyes and mouth wide open, exclaimed unconsciously, "God! money is as scarce thar as it is here."

In every sermon the circuit rider elaborated on all the doctrines of the Christian Church. In fact a person who listened to an average Methodist sermon was made familiar with the important tenets of the gospel. Since the minister preached at a single place only once in twenty-eight days he had to concentrate in every discourse upon the fundamentals of the Christian message. In each sermon the people were told of the fall of man and of his redemption through Jesus Christ. The man who listened once to a Methodist preacher knew the answer to "What shall I do to be saved?" The preachers insisted that this salvation was free to all; that all men stood equal in the sight of God; and that God was no respecter of persons. The listeners were reminded continually that a converted person had the witness of the Spirit in his life, and that it was possible for him to grow in grace and go onward to perfection.

Although the circuit riders offered free salvation to all, yet they never failed to hold before unrepentant sinners the punishment which awaited them at the hands of a powerful God. "Everyone of us must give an account



of himself to God" was a popular text. Such terms as "hell," "devil" and "damnation" were used so frequently by the Methodist preachers that some people who wanted to hear only soft, mild, polite sermons would charge them with swearing and blaspheming. John Strange warned a group who misbehaved during a sermon that God "by the slightest movement of his omnific power, could dash you deeper into damnation in a moment than a sunbeam could fly in a million ages!"

The Methodist divines were called the "now preachers" because they expected immediate results from their sermons. They spoke to the same group of people only once a month and each time might be the last opportunity for some one to hear the message of salvation. Before the circuit rider's return some in the audience might be dead and others might have moved farther west. A sermon that did not bring instantaneous results was therefore unsatisfactory to the preachers. That is why every service was made a "Pentecost."

The Methodist clergymen accepted the Bible literally. No textual or higher criticism caused them to doubt any passage of Scripture. For them, "Thus saith the Lord" was sufficient. The preachers quoted so liberally in their sermons from the Bible that listeners who did not often read the Bible learned in this manner of its contents.

The preachers promised to obey the Book of Discipline but Rule No. 6, "Take care not to ramble; but keep to your text, and make out what you take in hand," was constantly violated. Often in their enthusiasm they wandered from their texts. When sermons were several hours in length it is not surprising that this was true. Many early Methodist ministers imitated Rowland Hill, the fa-

mous English Methodist preacher who once at the beginning of a sermon said: "In the first place I shall walk up to my text and look at it. Secondly, I shall walk straight through my text. Thirdly, I shall walk around my text. And, lastly, I shall turn my back on my text and walk straight away from it."

The ministers were advised by the Discipline not to make their sermons too long, but so important was their message that it could not be quickly delivered. In contrast to modern conditions the Methodist laymen desired long sermons. When Peter Doub entered the itinerancy, his members objected to his preaching because the sermons were too brief. Doub apparently removed this objection for in 1830, in Rockingham county, North Carolina, he preached four hours and a quarter without any intermission. In 1805 at a service in Ohio the people listened to a sermon from Bishop Asbury, one from Bishop Whatcoat and two more from circuit riders and yet, as Judge McLean says, "So precious was the word of the Lord in those days that the congregation evinced no uneasiness, but paid the greatest attention to all the discourses."

The early Methodist ministers scorned honorary titles and degrees. The Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized thirty-eight years before any preacher dared to accept such an honor. A minister of another denomination once asked Peter Cartwright, "How is it that your denomination has no Doctors of Divinity? Cartwright's answer was, "Our divinity is not sick, and don't need doctoring."

The Church was greatly agitated when in 1822 Transylvania University conferred the degree of doctor of divinity upon Martin Ruter. This is considered to be the

first honorary title given to an American Methodist preacher. Ruter was criticised for accepting the degree. This action was interpreted by many to mean that Ruter had succumbed to the temptation of pride. Some insisted that having an honorary degree was similar to wearing jewels and costly raiment. So strong was this opposition that some preachers hesitated to accept honorary degrees. Peter Cartwright was given an honorary doctorate, but he announced that on the very next day he was taken with a severe pain in the back.

Sinners trembled before the preaching of these homiletical giants. Many who came cursing them went home weeping and praying. During the sermon people cried out for mercy and help. One man in Kentucky after listening to a Methodist preacher declared, "I do not like to hear Askins; he makes me feel as if I was in the very suburbs of hell." Many a rough frontiersman remarked after a Methodist sermon, "If what the preacher says is the truth, I must be in a bad fix." The Methodist preachers "get right into the heart, and there they stick until they tear it all to pieces," was the testimony of a Quaker.

## § 2. THE COURSE OF STUDY

The pioneer Methodist preachers were not graduates of theological seminaries. Only a few ever matriculated at a college. The majority of the itinerants had attended only elementary schools before joining conference. That does not mean, however, that the circuit riders were ignorant. On the contrary (to the surprise of their opponents) these men showed a remarkable acquaintance with the knowledge of their day. This was due largely to the fact that

all Methodist preachers were expected to read and study while serving their circuits.

John Wesley endeavored to raise the educational level of the Methodist ministry by requiring that each of his helpers read and study at least five hours a day. He refused to retain any preacher who did not continue to pursue knowledge. He curtly rebuked those who claimed that they had no taste for reading. He attributed the failure of some preachers to their refusal to read. To one minister, Wesley wrote: "Hence your talent in preaching does not increase; it is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety, there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this; you can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian."

The early American Methodists adopted Wesley's policy. The first Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church advised the preachers to rise at four A. M., in order that they might give at least five hours daily to study. "STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD" was the motto on Bishop Asbury's episcopal seal. This was stamped on all of Asbury's letters of credentials and ordination parchments. At the annual conferences the bishops would personally examine the ministers as to their scholarship. The presiding elders also assisted the young preachers along educational lines. Peter Cartwright once said: "We had at this early day no course of study prescribed, as at present; but William McKendree, afterwards bishop, but then my presiding elder, directed me to a proper course of reading and study. He selected

books for me, both literary and theological; and every quarterly visit he made, he examined into my progress and corrected my errors, if I had fallen into any."

An amazing amount of reading was done by some of the pioneer circuit riders. Their journals attest that fact. Alfred Brunson wrote thus: "We were bent upon the acquisition of knowledge, particularly such as pertained to our profession, and therefore resorted to all honest and honorable means tending to that object; our chief means was in books." Although Jesse Lee during the conference year of 1791-1792 preached 321 sermons, he found time to read 5,434 pages, exclusive of the Bible. Over a period of seventeen years William Winans averaged fifty pages of reading a day.

The Holy Bible was the preachers' primary textbook. Early in his ministry Bishop Asbury decided to read daily at least six chapters of the Bible. The ministers not only read the Scriptures but also studied them, marking the important passages. Often their Bibles were marred by the tears which dropped upon the sacred pages. They memorized portions of the Scriptures. Valentine Cook was so acquainted with the Bible that "no passages could be called for that he was not able to repeat, or to which he could not turn in a few minutes." The circuit riders became known as men who were "mighty in the Scriptures."

The Methodist itinerants pursued their literary labors in places not conducive to study. Although the modern preacher must have a "private study" such a thing was unknown in pioneer Methodism. During winter the circuit riders were forced to read and write in crowded one-room cabins, where the lighting facilities were poor.

Bishop Morris once remarked: "In the winter those whose eyes could bear it, read much at night. If they could obtain a lamp or candles, well; if not, they split boards and old fence rails to splinters, and throwing in a piece at a time, read by the blazing light." Another method was to study before dawn. On one occasion Asbury recorded in his journal: "This morning I ended the reading my Bible through in about four months. It is hard work for me to find time for this; but all I read and write I owe to early rising."

During the summer months the preachers studied under more favorable conditions. They could read more easily as they rode horseback through the country. It was possible to leave the crowded cabins and find a quiet place in barns or in the woods. Bishop Morris, reminiscing about his early itinerant days, narrated: "And in warm weather we took for our study the shade of a tree; or, if the musquitoes became very troublesome, the preacher might be occasionally seen up in the fork, or on a large limb of a beech-tree among the boughs, where these insects suffered him to pursue his studies in peace."

In 1816 a systematic plan of study for the preachers was adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The haphazard method of the first thirty-two years had not proved entirely satisfactory since many of the young preachers did not continue their studies after entering the itinerancy. The General Conference of 1816, therefore, instructed the bishops "to point out a course of reading and study proper to be pursued by candidates for the ministry." To enforce this legislation it was decided that no candidate could be received into full connection until he had satisfactorily passed an examination

on the course of study. It took time, however, to standardize the curriculum. It was not until 1848 that an official "course of study" appeared in the Discipline. Up to that time the books assigned varied with the bishops and the conferences.

The bishops when they outlined the course of study considered that a knowledge of the Holy Book was of greater importance than that of any theological or secular book. Doctrinal books ranked next to the Bible. The circuit riders endeavored to master Watson's Institutes, Fletcher's Checks, and Wesley's Sermons. For the first year of study as outlined in 1848, there were only three non-doctrinal books: English grammar, Mitchell's Geography, and Watson's Life of Wesley. Although grammar, logic and history were studied, yet as Cutshall points out, "during its domination the course may be said to have been Wesleyan, doctrinal and Biblical."

The conference probationers dreaded to be examined on the course of study. The sleep of many a young preacher was disturbed by the thought of the formal quiz which awaited him at conference. Men who could bravely face the rowdies at camp meetings were awed before the conference examiners. Many references to their fear of this ordeal are found in the journals of the ministers. James Erwin, late in life, wrote of his feeling when he faced in 1835 the committee of the Oneida Conference: "I don't know how my associates felt in coming before the committee, but no timid school boy ever felt more abashed when summoned before the dreaded pedagogue than I did 'when I to the awful presence came.' " George Coles tells that when at the New York Conference of 1820 he announced to a candidate that the committee was ready

for him, the young man exclaimed: "O Lord! if I am ever a bishop, I shall never forget this night."

The thought of the examination was often more dreadful than the ordeal itself. The nature of the test depended upon the conference. The Troy Conference for example had a reputation for strictness. The probationers there met with the committee from nine in the morning until nine at night. The majority of the examinations, however, were simple. It often happened that many members of the examining board were themselves unacquainted with the books assigned, and they therefore were only capable of questioning the candidates superficially upon general topics. The examiners because of insufficient knowledge were often confused. Once when a candidate asked the chairman of his committee to explain Watson's arguments on the evidences of Christianity, the latter hurriedly replied, "Now, look yer, I want you to understand, that I came here to ask questions, not to answer them."

Very few committees rejected a student if because of the duties of his circuit he had been unable to read the books assigned to him. He would be excused on the ground that the Discipline of 1784 stated: "Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is a better—If you can do but one, let your studies alone. We would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul." The preachers who had conscientiously prepared their assignments were often disgusted with the nature of the examinations. After the Genesee Conference of 1818 George Peck wrote: "I came away almost vexed. I had studied hard for two years, and the books over which I had spent many a day of intense application were hardly named."



Under such conditions it is not surprising that the conference examinations produced strange questions and even stranger answers. At the Kentucky Conference of 1830 Brother Wolliscroff was asked to explain the difference between the direct and indirect witness of the Spirit. He replied that he did not know unless one was Methodist and the other Baptist. When Brother Brush was asked by the same committee if he had ever read ancient history, he answered that he had read Robinson Crusoe and books of similar historical importance. The chairman of the examining committee at the Oneida Conference of 1835 required each candidate to give an example of an hyperbole. Unsatisfied with their answers he explained that an hyperbole was like the story of a "Yankee, who described the fleetness of his horse by saying that while in the pasture, a streak of lightning came down and chased the horse three times around a ten acre lot, and could not catch him."

Even with its many defects, the early course of study served a great purpose in American Methodism. Men who otherwise might have stopped their education were forced from at least two to four years to pursue standard books of theology, history and grammar. The course of study combined the theoretical with the practical because the circuit riders had the opportunity of putting into practice daily the knowledge gained from the books. Some ministers, of course, did not study but the majority did. Bishop Marvin declared that as a young man Watson's Institutes were soaked into him. Many of the preachers were like P. D. Gorrie, who although during the year of 1836 received only \$68, yet he spent one-third of it to purchase books "so that he might gain the necessary

amount of knowledge required by his Conference during the year." The course of study was of such importance in early Methodism that Bishop Morris once said: "The consequence of the whole was, many of the Methodist preachers who entered the work with very limited education, became not only grammarians, historians, philosophers, and orators, but what was much better, profound theologians and able ministers of the New Testament."

### § 3. SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

John Wesley desired an educated ministry. At the first Methodist conference ever held he asked his preachers this question: "Can we have a seminary for laborers?" The answer was, "If God spares us till another conference." The proposed divinity school never materialized, but at almost each succeeding conference until his death Wesley made mention of it. Wesley did not consider theological education foreign to the genius of Methodism.

The American Methodists, however, did not follow Wesley's leadership in this direction. It was sixty-three years after the Christmas Conference that the first Methodist theological seminary in America made its appearance. The alma mater of the early Methodist preachers was "Brush College," the popular designation for a large circuit. Of Brush College, John Strange, a pioneer circuit rider once said: "Her curriculum is the philosophy of nature and the mysteries of redemption; her library is the word of God, the Discipline, the hymn book, supplemented with trees and brooks and stones, all of which are full of wisdom and sermons and speeches; and her parchments of literary honors are the horse and the saddlebags."

The pioneer preachers considered the ministerial education furnished at "Brush College" or "College on Horseback" to be sufficient. They believed that the practical experience received there was of far more importance than formal theological instruction. The Methodists became so satisfied on this point that they were hostile to any proposed change. They declared that there was no place in Methodism for "priest factories."

The Methodist leaders contended that it was sinful to waste time in ministerial preparation when the fields were ripe unto harvest. The Church officially adopted this position in 1784 when it advised the preachers never to allow the pursuit of learning to interfere with soul saving. "If you can do but one," stated the Discipline, "let your studies alone. We would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul." When William Capers as a young man desired to make further literary preparation before entering the South Carolina Conference, his presiding elder warned him:—"and if you are called to preach, and sinners are falling daily into hell, take care lest the blood of some of them be found on your skirts."

Theological schools were counter to the Methodist theory that God furnished the preacher's message. It was believed that no amount of education could supply the divine call to preach. The circuit riders pointed to the fact that theological training was not required in apostolic Christianity. One of Peter Cartwright's best arguments against divinity schools was that "Christ had no literary college or university, no theological school or Biblical institute, nor did he require his first ministers to memorize his saying or sermons, but simply to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high,

when under the baptismal power of the Holy Ghost, should be brought to their remembrance all things whatsoever he had commanded them." Once when William Taylor, later Bishop Taylor, met a theological student, he said to him, "That's right, get all the light you can, but don't neglect the heat. Light without heat is of little worth in the Christian ministry."

History aided the Methodists in their fight against theological seminaries. They could truthfully declare that the Wesleyan movement had made phenomenal progress under the leadership of unlearned men. Peter Cartwright wrote: "It is true we could not, many of us, conjugate a verb or parse a sentence, and murdered the king's English almost every lick. But there was a Divine unction attended the word preached, and thousands fell under the mighty power of God, and thus the Methodist Episcopal Church was planted firmly in this Western wilderness, and many glowing signs have followed, and will follow, to the end of time." The logical conclusion to such an argument was that divinity schools were not needed at any time.

It must be admitted that on the American frontier the graduates of Brush College triumphed over the theologically trained men of other denominations. Peter Cartwright insisted that the illiterate Methodist preachers set America on fire while the educated preachers "were lighting their matches." Alfred Brunson explained that he was opposed to schools of prophets because of having seen "the effects of them in other churches, from which some learned dunces and third rate preachers had come forth." "I do not wish to undervalue education," said Cartwright, "but really I have seen so many of these educated preach-

ers who forcibly remind me of lettuce growing under the shade of a peach-tree, or like a gosling that has got the straddles by wading in the dew, that I turn away sick and faint."

Another argument against an educated ministry was that only unlearned men could really sympathize with and understand the lower classes of people. This attitude was shown when William Capers joined the South Carolina Annual Conference. Since Capers was the first college trained man to join that conference, many preachers and laymen predicted that Capers would fail because his education would render him haughty and proud. In 1840 Elias Bower wrote in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*: "All history shows that the Church invariably declines in spirituality in the same proportion as her ministry become distinguished for their general popularity as eloquent and learned divines."

It was popular in early Methodism to make jocular and even sarcastic remarks about the ministers who were graduates of colleges and theological schools. When Stephen Olin, an alumnus of Middlebury College, joined the South Carolina Conference in 1822, he was characterized by one member as a "hic, haec, hoc scholar," who could not be of any value to the Methodist itinerancy. On one occasion when a presiding elder in New York was asked by a bishop to explain the type of man desired for a certain place, the former could not resist the temptation to attack educated ministers. He replied: "Two years ago we had a professor of chemistry; last year we had a professor of Greek; now we want a professor of religion." One pioneer preacher declared: "I have heard of a wonderful thing under the sun. I have heard that men take the pure

Gospel seed and carry it to a 'theological mill' and get it ground to fine flour, and then sow it over the people, and wonder why it doesn't spring up and 'bear fruit.' "

The modern Methodist minister may be amused by the arguments used by the circuit riders against theological education, but in many ways those early Methodists were correct in their views. Pioneer Methodism did not necessarily need a trained ministry. No great educational demands were made upon the Methodist itinerants. The people with whom they worked were uneducated. The frontiersmen understood better the simple message of a circuit rider than they did a scholarly address from a Yale or Princeton graduate. Methodism did not stress doctrine, and therefore did not need theologians in the pulpit. The circuit system made more possible the use of uneducated preachers, for when a minister spoke at a different place each day of the month no large number of prepared sermons were required.

As Methodism grew older there came, however, a changed attitude toward theological training. Laymen of wealth and education began to demand preachers who were intellectually equal with those of other denominations. Trained ministers were said to be needed to attract the cultured people of the cities. It was contended that scholars were needed to reply in the press and on the platform to the opponents of Methodism. Stephen M. Vail, in contending for theological education said: "Shall we, for example, permit Dr. Judson's successors in India to go on as he did, translating the Greek term baptizo, to immerse, and thus permit them to make Baptists of these teeming nations of the East?" The division of the large circuits into smaller units destroyed the influence of Brush College, for the junior preacher could no longer

be trained under an old and experienced minister. Such conditions caused outspoken opponents of theological education to change their attitude. Brunson before his death said: "In view of all the circumstances of the case, the change from the circuit to the station system—the elevated state of society, and the wish of our people to have educated men—and in view of the influence mere tinsel of this kind has upon outsiders in attracting them to our places of worship, it is probably best to have such institutions." Even Peter Cartwright accepted an honorary degree from a college.

When the sentiment for theological training began to gain ground, it was thought by many that the existing Methodist colleges could provide the instruction. Arguments in favor of the control of theological education by the colleges were that no additional buildings would be required; that the student could pursue in addition to theology other courses of study; and that the presence of ministerial candidates on the campus would have a good influence upon the other students. As a result of this viewpoint a number of colleges began to organize departments of Biblical literature. Some leaders felt that such action had solved the problem of theological training.

There was one preacher, however, in the Methodist Episcopal Church who refused to be satisfied with this compromise. That man was John Dempster. While presiding elder of the Cayuga district of the Oneida Conference Dempster saw that although educated men were converted under Methodist preaching, many of them united with the denominations that had educated ministers. Dempster, therefore, appealed to Bishop Hedding to send better trained men into his district. The bishop replied,

"We have no such men to spare." Thereupon it became Dempster's great aim in life to establish schools that would furnish the needed men. With the exception of a few years spent as a missionary in South America, Dempster gave the remainder of his life to the cause of theological education. With the aid of friends he was finally able to found at Concord, New Hampshire, in 1847, the Methodist General Biblical Institute, the first theological school of American Methodism.

Dempster was not satisfied with one Methodist divinity school. He desired to organize three such institutions, one in the East, a second in the Middle West, and a third on the Pacific Coast. As soon as the institution at Concord was firmly established, Dempster took steps to start his second school. He arrived in Chicago at a very opportune time, for he found that Mrs. Eliza Garrett had made provision in her will for the establishment of a Methodist theological seminary near Chicago. Dempster was chosen as the president of this institution which opened in 1855 under the name of Garrett Biblical Institute. Dempster was making plans for his third divinity school when he died in 1863.

Thus by 1855 the American Methodists, who had for so many years opposed ministerial education, possessed two schools of the prophets. They represented in a large degree the work of John Dempster who realized that the time had come in Methodism when trained leaders were necessary. Although today John Dempster is honored as the father of theological education in American Methodism, yet during his life he was severely criticised. He had to pay the price for championing what was then an unpopular cause. In 1856 he wrote to a friend: "For



the last twelve years I have from an overwhelming sense of duty, been occupied in an enterprise in the face of fierce opposition on the part of at least two-thirds of our entire ministry. Some of the highest dignitaries of the church have exerted official influence to embarrass and subvert the enterprise. Many friends of my tenderest remembrance forsook me for having allied myself to this cause, and even transferred their hostility from the cause to him who advocated it."

## CHAPTER X

### THEY ALSO SERVED

#### § 1. THE ITINERANT'S WIFE



WE often think," says James Erwin, "of the trials and privations of those early circuit riders with deep sympathy, and admire their perseverance and courage, but seldom give a thought to the noble women who suffered with them, spending their days in loneliness and want, living often in poor tenements, on coarse and scanty fare, struggling with privations and sufferings without a murmur, in watchings, in fasting, and in earnest supplications that their husbands might be successful in preaching the Gospel of Christ to a perishing world."

It is true that those noble women of pioneer American Methodism have been overlooked by historians. The contributions of the circuit riders were so spectacular that it has been easy to forget the women who inspired and helped those men. The fact also that a majority of the early preachers were single, and if they did marry, located, accounts further for the lack of historical attention shown to their helpmates.

There was, however, as Methodism grew, an increasing number of men who refused to locate when they married. The church was consequently forced to adjust itself to a non-celibate clergy. The laymen at first objected to this change. They claimed that it was impossible for them to support a preachers's wife and children. Their arguments, of course, were fallacious. Methodism did not suffer because the ministers married; it was rather the wives of the preachers who were forced to sacrifice.

Methodist laymen demurred at building parsonages. "Why should special houses," they asked, "be erected for the minister's family when all the homes on the circuit are open to them?" Why could not the wife and children "board around" among the people as did the circuit rider? This suggestion was actually followed for a number of years, and, as a result, many embarrassing situations arose. It worked a great hardship on the preacher's family. The wife was made to feel that she was not welcome in some homes. Parsimonious laymen hinted that she was an added expense to the Church and a serious handicap to the work of her husband. The following testimony of John Stewart is typical. While on the Madison circuit in Indiana in 1822, Stewart wrote: "My wife was especially anxious to enjoy more privacy for study and devotion, and better opportunity for educating her boy than she could have mixing in with so many family circles, some of whom took their turn keeping the preacher's family rather in the light of duty than otherwise. But we made the best we could of our circumstances and tried to do the best we could for the cause of God."

Methodism slowly came to realize that homes must be provided for the married preachers. As early as 1780 Bishop Asbury had written: "We spoke of a plan for building houses in every circuit for preachers' wives, and the society to supply their families with bread and meat; so the preachers should travel from place to place, as when single." It was not, however, until the General Conference of 1800 that any official action was taken. That conference recommended that each circuit provide a parsonage which was to be furnished "at least" with heavy furniture. If this could not be done, the stewards

were directed to rent a house for the preacher. Even that legislation did not bring immediate results. As late as 1810 there were only three Methodist parsonages in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and only one of which (according to Bishop Capers) was fit to be used. By 1840, however, the parsonage building era of Methodism had begun. Eighteen years later the Methodist Episcopal Church was erecting on an average of one parsonage for every two days in the year.

The term "parsonage" connoted many different things in pioneer Methodism. When William Capers took his bride to the Methodist parsonage at Wilmington, North Carolina, it consisted of "two rooms eighteen by twelve, one above the other, with a sort of stepladder on the outside to go to the upper story, and a shed room attached to serve for a bedroom if necessary." The Methodists at Boardman, Ohio, not being able to provide any other house for their preacher, "cleared out and fitted up a small building, which had previously been occupied—the lower part for a hog pen and the upper part for a corn house." In 1840 Claiborne C. Trussell was sent to the Telfair circuit in the Georgia Conference. When he arrived there with his family he found no home. The stewards decided to build at once. According to the record, they "cut and peeled pine poles and built a shanty with dirt chimney, unplanned plank floor, no ceiling overhead, and only one door. In this shanty good patient sister Trussell and her four children lived, cooked, ate and slept in the same room, while Brother Trussell rode the circuit." The preachers often found other inhabitants in the parsonages. One minister described the house furnished him as "a dirty old wooden building, flat in the mud, worst of all, when the walls were warmed, the origi-

nal inhabitants—ten thousand strong, sallied forth from behind beds and chairs and through cracks and crevices to possess the land.”

In such places the minister's wife and children lived the greater part of the time. The Methodist circuit system required the preachers to be continually absent from home. Joshua Soule, for example, when twenty-three years of age, was appointed presiding elder of the Maine district. During the first two years on the district, he spent only three weeks with his young wife. Preachers often became strangers in their own home. All the responsibility for the education and care of the children, therefore, was placed upon the mother.

The preacher's wife had to be very circumspect, for the qualities demanded in her were many. In order not to hurt the work of her husband she had to be the model of tact. She dared not criticise anybody and anything connected with the circuit lest she be informed that if conditions were not satisfactory that she and her husband could go elsewhere. She was forced to do all her house work regardless of circumstances or be criticised as being extravagant. The laymen might refuse to pay the quarterage if they believed the preacher's family was living in ease and luxury. As the hostess of the parsonage, the minister's wife had to entertain extensively. When the women on the circuit came to town, they considered the parsonage as the center of hospitality. Did they not feed and lodge the preacher when he came to their homes? The minister's wife could not be reserved lest she be considered proud and haughty. She dared not be talkative lest she be charged with gossiping. She was expected to be the leader among the women in all religious work. If she failed at this point the members would criticise her hus-

band for not ruling his own household. Yes, the requirements of a Methodist circuit rider's wife were many. John Wesley once remarked that a "preacher's wife should be a pattern of cleanliness in her person, clothes, and habitation. Let nothing slatternly be seen about her; no rags, no dirt, no litter. And she should be a pattern of industry; always at work, either for herself, her husband, or the poor."

Bishop Asbury realized that the helpmates of his preachers had many vexing problems to face. Although Asbury was opposed to the marriage of the circuit riders, yet no minister's wife had a better friend and adviser than Bishop Asbury. "He had a great concern," says Jacob Gruber, "about the preachers' wives, that they should be examples like holy women of old, helpmeets, and labor with their husbands in the gospel, in the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope. He sometimes in time of Conference invited the preachers' wives to meet him at some convenient place and then gave them such directions and instructions as he saw necessary or proper, that they might not by their example pull down what their husbands built up by preaching."

Although the circuit rider's wife at all times had to sacrifice and suffer, her condition became acute at the death of her husband. She was then not only separated from her work to which she had given her life, but she also had no home or financial support for her children. The annual conferences endeavored to aid the widows and orphans of deceased itinerants by giving them an annual contribution, but the amount raised was very small. In 1849 the Ohio Conference had \$1410.10 to divide among forty-seven claimants. The following were some typical grants:

"Sister C. and children .....	\$29.89
Sister F. and children .....	34.75
Sister C. and children .....	34.75
Sister F. and children .....	37.97
Sister A. and children .....	37.97"

It was a great sacrifice for a woman to marry an early Methodist itinerant. It is not surprising that most parents were opposed to their daughters engaging themselves to "wandering Methodist preachers." Many ministers, like T. M. Eddy, hesitated to ask a woman to bear with him the hardships incident to the itinerancy. Eddy in a letter to his sweetheart, Anna White, wrote: "Dear Anna, while I write a feeling of subdued joy plays round my heart. I have joy in the knowledge that I am loved; yet when I see the life which awaits you in the itinerant service, as a homeless wanderer, as subject to severe trials, I am almost led to accuse myself of selfishness in demanding or requesting the sacrifice of you."

Yet to their everlasting honor the wives of those pioneer preachers not only braved the hardships of the Methodist ministry, but they also inspired and encouraged their husbands. They were such a noble group of women that Bishop Foster once remarked that "most Methodist preachers seem to meet with surprising success in the choice of their wives." Those women refused to stand in the way of their husbands' work. J. O. Andrew, later Bishop Andrew, once had decided, on account of financial reasons to locate. He remained in the ministry because his wife said to him: "No, my husband, no; I married you as a traveling Methodist preacher. I believed God had called you to that work; and you shall never cease without my consent. I can work to help you along; and God will

never suffer us to want, if we do our duty and trust in him." By the "earnings of her needle at midnight's weary watch," Mrs. Andrew kept her husband in the itinerancy and thereby gave to American Methodism one of its greatest and noblest bishops. The following excerpt from the diary of E. F. Newell of the New England Conference not only bespeaks the heroism of the itinerants' wives, but it also tells in part why Methodism succeeded in America: "July 13, 1822. Left my dear companion sick with consumption, and unable to sit up but little, to go and preach the Gospel. When I asked her opinion about leaving her she replied, 'I think it your duty to go, for you may do good in the name of the Lord, and the Lord will take care of me; if I die I shall go to rest and hope to meet you in heaven'."

## § 2. AMERICAN SUSANNA WESLEYS

Methodism owes much to the mother of John Wesley, for it was Susanna Wesley that gave her illustrious son his first conception of vital religion. She also bequeathed to her son the courage and independent spirit which characterized her life. John Wesley was saved from many errors in the organization of Methodism by the wise counsel of his mother. Millions of Methodists have thanked God for the life, the character, and the influence of Susanna Wesley.

Because of the goodness and greatness of his mother, John Wesley held all women in high esteem. He differed with the political and social leaders of eighteenth century England who claimed that women should not participate in public affairs. "It has long passed for a maxim with many," wrote Wesley, "that 'women are only to be seen,



not heard.' Is this doing honor to the sex? No, it is the deepest unkindness; it is horrid cruelty; it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right which the God of nature has given you. You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally candidates for immortality; you too are called of God, as you have time, to do good unto all men."

Under Wesley's leadership women played an important role in English Methodism. They served as visitors of the sick and the prisoners, as class leaders and as Sunday school teachers. It was a Methodist lady, Sophia Cooke, who suggested the idea of the modern Sunday school to Robert Raikes. Wesley even believed that women had the right to preach and he would have used them as lay preachers had not public opinion been so hostile to women evangelists. A lady of the aristocracy, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, was the leader and the financial supporter of Calvinistic Methodism in England.

Women were active in raising the banner of Methodism in the New World. It was Mrs. Robert Strawbridge rather than her husband who influenced John Evans, the first Methodist convert in America. Mrs. Sarah Porter, the daughter of Evans, states that while her father was laboring on Strawbridge's farm in Maryland, "Mrs. Strawbridge introduced the subject of experimental religion, which made such an impression on his mind as to result in his subsequent conversion to God." Four of the seven or eight members that composed Robert Strawbridge's first Methodist class were women. It was a devout lady, Mrs. Barbara Heck, that aroused Philip Em-

bury from his spiritual lethargy and caused him to preach the first Methodist sermon in New York City.

Mrs. Barbara Heck and Mrs. Robert Strawbridge were not the only American Susanna Wesleys. Thousands of Methodist women have emulated the mother of John Wesley, but their contributions, not being of the spectacular nature, have been overlooked. Yet it can safely be stated that American Methodism would never have made its magnificent achievements without the assistance of those noble women.

Devout Methodist women like Hannah of old dedicated their sons to the Lord. "The secret of our abundant supply of ministers, next to the call of God," writes Buckley, "is the devout consecration of their sons to the ministry by holy mothers." Wilbur Fisk, the outstanding leader of New England Methodism, a man who twice declined the episcopacy, owed his greatness to his good mother. Of her it has been written: "She was very assiduous in impressing upon the minds of her children, the great impulses of Christianity. She took them early and constantly to the church, made it a particular business to read to them the word of God; required them to learn their catechism, and commit texts, hymns, and prayers to memory." That statement could be made about thousands of other Methodist women whose prime aim in life was to rear Christian sons and daughters.

Bishop Asbury made many comments in his journal about the Methodist ladies who cared for him in his physical afflictions. Mary White, wife of Judge Thomas White of Delaware, Anna Bassett, wife of Senator Richard Bassett of Delaware, and Mary Tiffin, wife of Governor Edward Tiffin of Ohio, were only a few of the noble women who befriended Asbury. They ministered to him in many

ways. "They afforded him," writes Stevens, "hundreds of temporary but hospitable homes, to which he delighted to return in his long routes, and often, as he advances in life, and as he recurs to his old and beloved places of entertainment, to find the place of the wife and mother vacant by death, his allusions break out with a passionate grief which nothing but his hope of reunion in heaven could relieve."

The Methodist women befriended the circuit riders. Many disheartened ministers remained in the itinerancy because of the encouragement given by pious ladies. "Our early history," says Buckley, "abounds in instances of preachers who in discouragement have been about to abandon the field. Godly women have set upon them with vehement exhortations and reanimated their faith and turned their faces toward the field of battle once more." The women fed the itinerants, nursed them to health, and washed and patched their clothes. Elizabeth Russell, sister of Patrick Henry and wife of General William Russell, was one of those loyal women of pioneer Methodism. "The itinerants who visited her," declares Price, "seldom went away empty-handed. A neat suit of clothes, a fresh horse, or money for necessary expenses were bestowed with a tact that never offended the most delicate sensibilities."

Many of the frontiersmen would have forgotten God had not women been instrumental in bringing Methodism to the frontier. Methodist preaching began in many out-of-way places because of the pleas of holy women. The story of how Methodism started in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, is typical of how women aided. For many years it was hard for Methodism to secure a foothold at Harper's Ferry because so few people would attend the services.

Finally a Methodist lady of that town decided that she would aid the discouraged itinerant. She arranged for a quilting to be held in her home on the day that Robert R. Roberts, the circuit rider was due there. When the women of the town had gathered for the quilting, Roberts appeared and he proceeded to preach to them. His sermon so pleased the ladies that another appointment was made before the quilting ended. As the women talked about Roberts he became the topic of conversation for the village and when he returned the curiosity had become so high that he had a large audience. From that date (1804) Methodism became firmly established in Harper's Ferry.

The Methodist women were more loyal than the men in attendance at divine services. They were present at meeting even if the men, because of secular pursuits or other reasons were unable to attend. The circuit riders sometimes preached to audiences composed only of women. John B. Hudson relates the following experience during his ministry in western New York: "When I came to Sela's Creek the people were mostly gone to the races. Captain Sela said there would be no meeting. However, I went to the school house and there, to my surprise, I found sixty persons, all female (excepting one man who was blind) and mostly young ladies of respectable appearance." The faithfulness of the Methodist women in attending divine services caused a minister to declare: "If it were not for our devoted women one-half of our churches would perish the first year, and the other half the second."

An influence for righteousness radiated from the pioneer Methodist women. Once when Bishop Asbury inspected the salt-works in the Holston region, he exclaimed, "Alas! there is little salt here, and when Sister Russell is

gone there will be none left." Sarah Roszel of Maryland was one of the Methodist mothers in Israel. Of her Smith wrote: "Her house must have been the preachers' home for more than sixty years, and a house of God for the neighborhood. I always felt myself as a mere child in the presence of this mother in our Israel. The great amount of good that this primitive Methodist, and excellent woman has done, in various ways, will not be known in time; but when the Lord shall come to make up his jewels, and reward his followers, it will be seen and read of all men." American Methodism was fortunate in having thousands of such good women.

The labors of the pioneer women in preparing the material comforts for the religious services have often been overlooked. The women worked late into the night preparing food for the pioneer camp meetings and quarterly conferences. When preaching was held in private homes it was the task of the wife to provide food for all who attended. The following reminiscence of Bishop Marvin exemplifies that fact: "Mr. and Mrs. McConnell were Methodists. At first and for some years they were the only Methodists in the immediate neighborhood—say within three miles of our home. Their house was open for meetings. The first circuit preaching in our neighborhood was under their roof. It was the only preaching place for years. This involved a great deal of labor, for many loungers would always stay for dinner. More than once, when a thoughtless boy, I did so myself."

It was a woman, Mrs. Eliza Garrett, who made the largest single financial contribution to American Methodism prior to the Civil War. In 1834 Mrs. Garrett and her husband, Augustus Garrett, located in Chicago and there became members of the Methodist Episcopal

Church. Garrett became wealthy. At his death Mrs. Garrett came into the possession of a large fortune. She determined that a great part of her wealth should be given to her Church. Upon the advice of her pastor and her attorney, Mrs. Garrett decided to found an institution for the training of Methodist preachers. So on December 2, 1853, Mrs. Garrett bequeathed by her will the residue of her estate "to the erection, furnishing and endowment of a "Theological Institution for the Methodist Episcopal Church." Mrs. Garrett's gift amounted to about \$250,000, and with it there was founded at Evanston, Illinois, in 1855, Garrett Biblical Institute, a school which has for seventy-five years prepared thousands of men for the Methodist ministry.

As American Methodism grew older women began to serve in other than individual capacities. In 1817 some Methodist women in New York City organized a Tract Society. At the Baltimore Annual Conference of 1818 it was announced that a group of ladies in the conference had united themselves into an organization called the "Female Benevolent Society of Baltimore" for the relief of the needy preachers and for missionary purposes. In 1819 there was organized the first Methodist missionary society in America. Ninety days after the founding of that society the first auxiliary body came into existence. It was the "Female Missionary Society at New York." At Tusculum, Alabama, in July, 1826, the Methodist women formed themselves into a band to fast and pray for a religious awakening.

Both individually and collectively the women of early American Methodism contributed mightily to the success of the Wesleyan movement. They were true followers of the women who in the time of the Saviour were the first

to accept Him, the last to desert Him at the cross, and the first to come to the open tomb. No branch of the Christian church, says Disoway, "affords more illustrious examples of distinguished holy women than the Methodist." Methodism is grateful for the many women who emulated Susanna Wesley.

### § 3. THE LOCAL PREACHERS

The circuit riders did not have a monopoly on preaching during the pioneer period of American Methodism. There were other men, called local preachers, who also proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. These local preachers supported themselves by secular occupations but gave their spare moments to preaching and other religious activities. The term "local" designated the fact that the ministry of these men was limited to a small area. The local preachers did not travel the large circuits, nor were they eligible to membership in the annual conferences. The local preachers, however, could be ordained as deacons and elders and were able thereby to administer the sacraments.

Religious workers such as local preachers were greatly needed in early American Methodism. There was never a sufficient number of traveling preachers to cover intensively all the territory claimed by Methodism. The circuits were so large that the itinerants were usually unable to preach more than once a month at each appointment. That meant that only about four to eight appointments on a circuit could have preaching on Sunday. A local ministry was necessary if all the members were to have divine services on the Sabbath. The inability of the circuit rider to remain long in any one place produced

inconveniences because in his absence unless there should be local helpers, there would be no preacher to give comfort in the hour of sickness and death, to administer the sacraments, or to perform the marriage ceremony.

The apparent dangers in the Methodist plan of a traveling ministry never materialized because there were men other than the circuit riders who felt called of God to preach the gospel. These individuals, however, because of domestic and financial reasons were unable to enter the itinerancy but they could give at least one day of each week to active ministerial work. The Methodist leaders both in England and America saw the great possibilities for good in the use of this local talent. Men characterized by devotion and ability to exhort or preach were officially licensed as Methodist local preachers. In 1796 the regulations concerning the local ministry occupied one section of the Methodist Book of Discipline.

Safeguards were placed about the licensing of local preachers. An individual who desired to become a local preacher was required to have a knowledge of the Methodist doctrines and practices and to possess the same gifts, grace, and usefulness as demanded of a traveling preacher. It was also necessary for the applicant to have the approval of the Methodists with whom he daily associated. Before a man was licensed as a local preacher he had to be recommended by his own society, and approved by the quarterly conference of his circuit. The licenses had to be renewed annually. If a local preacher neglected to attend class meetings, if he acted dishonestly, if he preached false doctrines, or if he were guilty of "improper tempers, words, or actions," his license would be revoked. Price in describing the pioneer local preachers, writes, "Indeed if a local preacher did not make it appear at the



fourth quarterly conference that he had preached much during the year he usually got a hackling from the presiding elder. It mattered not where he preached so he preached to mortal souls. It was silence not preaching that gave offense in that day."

The local preachers did not consider their office to be a sinecure; it was to them a serious obligation. The journals of the local preachers are filled with accounts of loyal service which often equaled the labors of the itinerants. The circuit riders were happy to have local preachers on their circuits. The former would arrange the appointments so that the local preachers could hold divine services in their absence. While William Watters was a local preacher, he wrote thus concerning his work: "I rode, I believe, for a considerable part of the year as much in the circuit as the preacher who was appointed to it. I attended Greenville preaching-house, forty miles off, every fourth Sabbath, and Leesburg, thirty miles off, every fourth Sabbath, besides the places between me and those above mentioned." Another example of the labors of the local ministry is found in the Miami circuit in 1800, for in that year no itinerant was sent there by the annual conference. There were, however, four or five local preachers on the Miami circuit and they undertook the task of carrying on the work of the circuit rider. They divided the field, systematized their operations, and preached not only on Sunday but also on week days.

It is often forgotten that the local preachers were the vanguard of American Methodism and that they preceded the circuit riders in the frontier sections. Stevens declares, "It may, in fine, be affirmed that not only was Methodism founded in the New World by local preachers—by Embury in New York, Webb in New Jersey and

Pennsylvania, Strawbridge in Maryland, Neal in Canada, Gilbert in the West Indies, and Black in Nova Scotia—but that nearly its whole frontier march, from the extreme north to the Gulf of Mexico, has been led on by these humble laborers.” McAnally, after he had made an exhaustive study of the origin and progress of Methodism in America, came to the conclusion that in four cases out of five if not nine out of ten, where Methodism was first introduced into a particular region of any considerable extent that it was through the instrumentality of local preachers. This occurred because local preachers when they migrated to the West began to hold divine services in their own homes and to organize their neighbors into Methodist societies.

The local preachers showed an unselfish spirit in their work, that is, they surrendered their own chances of personal advancement for the good of united Methodism. Since the local preachers were the pioneers of religion in many places, they might easily have established a congregational system. They could have placed themselves at the head of the Methodist societies and have declared their independence of Methodist polity. As McAnally says, “What discord and confusion, disruption and disunion they might have produced!—such as would have marred the prosperity and hindered the growth of Methodism for generations to come.” The local preachers, however, adopted the opposite policy. They requested the bishop to send circuit riders to supervise the societies which had been organized. The local preachers were willing to become assistants to young and inexperienced itinerants. They opened their homes to the traveling preachers. They also contributed toward the expenses of the Church.

It was normal, however, for some of the local preachers to feel that they were not fully appreciated by the Methodist Episcopal Church and that they were being discriminated against in some ways. Many of the local preachers felt that they should be allowed to participate in the legislative councils of the Church; that they should be given membership in the annual conferences; that they should have a part in the administration of the discipline and that they should be given some compensation for their services. At times dissatisfaction in the local ranks became strong. In 1820 in order to conciliate the local preachers the General Conference granted them the right to hold district conferences of their own, at which meetings local preachers were to make their reports and have their licenses renewed. This plan did not prove to be a success and in 1836 it was abandoned. The local preachers always held the dual position of being considered in some respects as laymen and in others as preachers.

It must be remembered that the local preachers received no regular compensation for their spiritual labors. They had no disciplinary guarantee of a salary, nor were they eligible to receive any of the profits of the Book Concern or the proceeds of the Chartered Fund. Their work was a labor of love. Many Methodist laymen felt no obligation to recompense a local preacher, although they would listen to him preach week after week. Dan Young lived during the period when the pioneer local preachers were making their great contributions to Methodism. He wrote thus concerning them: "Where else can we look for such numerous body of men making such sacrifices for the public good and the prosperity of the church? They have to meet their expenses for books, clothing, keeping or hiring a horse, their time and labor in preaching, and in gen-

eral receive no pecuniary compensation; and when they receive any it is very small in proportion to their work. But the consolation is that God rewards them for their labors of love."

Even though the local preachers were never promised any financial aid, yet there was never a scarcity of local preachers in early American Methodism. Thousands of men offered their spare time to the Church. In 1836 the first census of Methodist local preachers was taken. There were then 4,954 men who held licenses as local preachers. In 1844 there were 8,087 local preachers, which far exceeded the number of traveling preachers. There was in the Holston Conference in 1835 nearly four local preachers to each traveling minister. Over eighty local preachers were in eight circuits of that conference.

The local ministry attracted not only many men but also great men. Among the local preachers of early Methodism were Edward Tiffin, the first governor of Ohio and later a member of the United States Senate. Thomas Scott, a Methodist local preacher became chief justice of Ohio. Many local preachers were noted for their ability in exhortation and in the delivery of sermons. In fact many of the local preachers had once been circuit riders, but on account of financial reasons had to locate and enter the ranks of the local ministry.

Perhaps it is difficult today on account of the great number of traveling preachers for modern Methodists to fully appreciate the value and contributions of the local preachers in pioneer Methodism. On account of the lack of the spectacular in the story of the local preachers many people fail to see the part played by the local ministry in the romance of American Methodism. Grissom, however, was stating the truth when he wrote: "The Church may

be able to get along at this day (1905) without local preachers; but the local ministry has been largely instrumental in making Methodism what it is. These local preachers pioneered the way, felled the trees, broke up the fallow ground, planted the seeds, and now we are gathering their crop." Bishop Asbury realized the value of the local preachers. Once while presiding at an annual conference, Asbury declared: "Brethren, our local preachers are the cream of our Church." Pearson in his poem, **Methodism, a Retrospect and Outlook**, has in the following manner beautifully described the local preachers:

"Assistants multiplied on every hand,  
And helped to spread the Gospel o'er the land,  
Constrained by love of Christ who freely gave,  
Freely they sought the souls of men to save;  
Men who toiled hard six days for daily bread  
To unpaid toil for Christ the seventh sped."

#### § 4. PILLARS IN THE TEMPLE

When John Wesley began his evangelistic work in England he had expected the Anglican clergymen to aid him. This they refused to do and at one time the future of the Methodist movement appeared dark indeed. Laymen, however, came to the rescue of Wesley. Carpenters, farmers and laborers answered Wesley's call for assistants and since that time laymen have played an important role in Methodism. It is doubtful, however, if they have anywhere or at any time exhibited a nobler spirit than during the period of pioneer American Methodism. They won for themselves during the days of Asbury and McKendree the title of "Pillars in the Temple."

In many places of America it was a layman who raised the banner of Methodism. Especially was this true on the frontier. Devout pioneers as soon as they had built their cabins began to long for the religious gatherings which they had attended in the Eastern states. In every section of the West there were always to be found a few Methodist families whose religious zeal was not destroyed by the hardships of the frontier. They did not postpone services until the arrival of a circuit rider. Laymen began to hold class meetings and often when a Methodist preacher reached distant localities he found to his surprise a nucleus of a Methodist society.

Richard Haney's account of how Methodism began in a certain section of Illinois exemplifies the work of the pioneer laymen. "Not long after the time," wrote Haney, "when Methodism was introduced into St. Clair County, a remarkable circumstance occurred in the southeastern portion of the State. A party of eight or ten men were together assisting an emigrant to put up a cabin not far from the mouth of the Wabash, when it was proposed that they meet on the next Sabbath at one of the cabins for worship. To this they all agreed. On the Sabbath eight women and ten men assembled. But amongst them there was no one who had ever conducted public worship. Indeed, of the men not one had ever made a profession of religion. A three legged stool was placed in the midst of them, a Bible laid upon it, and then all waited for some one to begin the service. No one being willing to lead, the man of the house suggested that nine straws be prepared of equal length and one a little longer and that he who drew the longer one should conduct the service. To this they all pledged themselves. The longest straw was drawn by George Davidson, who with great trepidation

commenced the task. After reading a chapter in the Bible, they sang the hymn, beginning, "Come thou Fount of every blessing," and then he fell upon his knees to pray. As with sinking heart and trembling voice he began, the power of God fell upon the assembly; before he arose from his knees he was powerfully converted, and others were prostrate on the floor, crying for mercy. It was not long before some of them were converted, and the work went on until every adult in the settlement had become a child of God. They chose Mr. Davidson as their leader, who continued to lead them and minister to them until they were supplied with the services of an itinerant by Bishop Asbury."

The laymen did more than organize classes; they petitioned for the spiritual leaders. As McFerrin says, "Our brethren, moving from the old settlements together, would settle in the same neighborhood. As soon as they could build some cabins they would go in search of a preacher; and there would be a society raised." On many occasions Bishop Asbury sent circuit riders to regions of which he knew nothing except that a frontiersman there had begged for a preacher. In 1802 Jacob Young was sent to organize a circuit in Kentucky. In his journal Young wrote: "Some time after dark, and while stopping at a tavern, a man called at the door. Being asked what he wanted, he inquired if there was not a Methodist preacher there. I heard him and was soon on the porch. He said he understood I was forming a circuit through the country, and wanted me to take in his house for one of the appointments." Young left at once for the man's cabin, which was ten miles away.

These pioneer laymen protected the preachers on their dangerous journeys. Armed men would often ride with

the circuit riders to their appointments and guard them during the service. George Callanhan once preached at Carpenter's Station, Ohio, where "fifteen or twenty hardy backwoodsmen armed with rifles, tomahawks, and scalping knives, stood on the outside of the assembly as protectors against an alarm." Laymen also guided the preachers over the frontier trails. In 1801 when Bishop Asbury was in the Holston country he recorded in his journal: "Our host became our guide, and tripped over the hills with us in the rain, his mare barefoot and himself without a saddle to ride or a great coat to shield him from the weather."

The frontiersmen gladly offered their humble homes as resting places for the itinerants. Their warm welcome encouraged the weary circuit riders. When Henry Smith was traveling the Scioto circuit in 1799 he found a man working in a cornfield. Smith inquired of him as to where he could find some people called Methodists. The frontiersman who had been a Methodist before settling in the West was overjoyed at seeing a Methodist minister again. "He leaped over the fence," says Smith, "ran to me, and took me by the hand, with all the cordiality of a true Irishman." Bishop Asbury continually wrote in his journal about the acts of kindness extended him by noble laymen. Many circuit riders could have reminisced as did William Landrum: "And often have I thought of the generosity of the Cannons, the Stevensons, the Crawfords, the Stewards, the Ruckers, the Goadies, the Woods, the Rawlingses, the Allens, the Nutters, the Keeners, the Elberts, the Jacobys, and others, many of whom have been called to their reward on high." During the log-cabin era a layman could offer only poor accommodations to



the preachers, but as soon as a more commodious house was erected provision was made for a "prophet's room."

As class leaders and as exhorters the laymen contributed mightily to the progress of the Wesleyan movement in America. A man with oratorical talents would be licensed as an exhorter. Although the exhorters were not allowed to select a text, yet the hortatory addresses given by them at the close of the minister's sermon were often additional sermons. When the itinerant was unable to meet his appointment an exhorter would often read one of Wesley's sermons to the congregation.

The laymen also served along financial lines. The office of steward was an early institution in American Methodism. According to the Discipline of 1784 the stewards were to be the financial agents of the Church. They were to be men of "solid piety, who both know and love the Methodist doctrine and discipline, and of good natural and acquired abilities to transact the temporal business." Although it must be admitted that many of the early Methodist laymen were parsimonious and had strange views as to the support of the ministry, yet it was only through their labor and gifts that the pioneer churches were erected, that the missions were supported and that the pioneer colleges were founded. Hundreds of Methodist churches still bear the name of some generous layman who first opened his home for Methodist preaching services and then later gave land and money for the erection of a chapel.

In the face of the loyalty shown by those early Methodist laymen it has always been considered strange that they were so long denied representation in the legislative bodies of the Church. The exclusion of the laymen as representatives in the annual and general conferences was in

line with Wesley's policy in England, but it was followed in America more because those conferences in the pioneer period of American Methodism dealt mainly with matters relating directly to the clergy; such as the passing on the character of the preachers and the announcement of the appointments. As Methodism made phenomenal progress under clerical legislation the feeling arose that it would be a mistake to change this part of the Methodist polity.

As Methodism however grew older its ecclesiastical machinery became more complex. Situations arose in which the advice of laymen was desirable. Their executive ability was also needed when Methodism began on a larger scale its missionary, Sunday school, publication, and educational work.

The period of Jacksonian democracy in America coincided with the rise of those new ecclesiastical agencies. It was therefore only natural that the men who demanded more democracy in political affairs would desire the same in the field of religion. They argued that since the Church was an association of equals no one group should possess all legislative, executive and judicial rights. Some laymen claimed that they were being taxed without representation, and that a principle which their Revolutionary forefathers resisted unto blood should be rejected in the Church. Others contended that more converts could be secured if the stigma of clerical autocracy could be erased.

The opponents of lay representation replied that the harmful effects of such a plan would far outweigh any of its supposed benefits. It was stated that the sending of laymen to annual and general conferences would produce the practice of ecclesiastical electioneering, and would tend to secularize the Church. It was also claimed that very few laymen could leave their work long enough to attend

a general conference; that lay representation would be an added expense to the Church; and that wealthy members would be selected as delegates instead of devout individuals.

The agitation for lay representation was especially strong between 1820-1830, but the champions of the old order were able to prevent a change of polity. The result was that in 1830 a group of laymen and ministers seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church and organized the Methodist Protestant Church, an important characteristic of which, was the granting of lay representation in all its ecclesiastical conferences.

The laymen proved their loyalty and love for the mother Church when the General Conference of 1828 rejected the plan of lay representation. Only a small number of them joined the Methodist Protestant Church. On the other hand the clergy came to realize that the many supposed dangers of lay representation were of little consequence. So from 1830 on many annual conferences by extra-legal methods gave to the laymen what really amounted to lay representation. This tendency continued to grow until in 1866 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, authorized lay representation in all of its conferences. In 1870 laymen for the first time participated in a general conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. By 1872 the Methodist Episcopal Church had adopted the policy of allowing each annual conference to send two laymen to the general conference.

Lay representation proved a success. The laymen at the General Conference of 1870 showed a sincere interest in ecclesiastical legislation. Their attitude caused Bishop Paine to write: "The inauguration of lay delegation has

worked admirably, confirming our conviction that the laity can greatly aid in managing the great interests of the Church, and I hope they will return home with the impression that they are not only welcomed, but that they are felt to be an important element in our deliberations." Thus in 1870, laymen as co-legislators of the Church, began to serve Methodism with the same loyalty and devotion as was shown by their forefathers, who in a more humble manner expressed their love for Methodism by organizing class meetings, by serving as stewards and exhorters, and by entertaining and encouraging the pioneer circuit riders.

## CHAPTER XI

# METHODIST MISSIONARY ENDEAVORS

### § 1. THE MISSIONARY BISHOP



**THOMAS COKE**, the missionary bishop of early American Methodism, was born on September 9, 1747, at Brecon, in South Wales. His father, an eminent and wealthy surgeon, desired that his son should have a good education. Thomas therefore attended Oxford University, from which institution he received the degrees of bachelor of arts, master of arts, and doctor of civil laws. Coke entered the priesthood of the Anglican Church in 1770 and shortly after became a curate in the parish of South Petherton.

While at South Petherton, Coke came into contact with the Methodists and was deeply affected by their vital type of religion. In 1776 he made a special trip to meet John Wesley. After their conference Wesley wrote in his journal: "I preached at Taunton, and afterwards went with Mr. Brown to Kingston.—Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College, in Oxford who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him, and a union then began which I trust shall never end."

The intimate relationship between Wesley and Coke which Wesley so much desired began one year later when Coke lost his curacy in the Anglican Church. The use by Coke of Methodist practices in the South Petherton parish caused him to become very unpopular with his parishioners. "The genteel portion," writes Daniels, "were offended at his zeal, the impenitents at his severity; while those who had relied on their outward morality for sal-

vation were disgusted to hear that, without being born again, even they could not enter the kingdom of God. The neighborly clergy were displeased because Coke drew away their congregations, and the choir of the parish church were wounded in their vanity because the curate had introduced the singing of hymns by the congregation, instead of leaving all the praise and glory of the music to them." Under such conditions Coke was forced to leave South Petherton.

Coke thereupon allied himself with the Methodists. He exchanged his prospects in the Church of England for the unpopularity of a Methodist preacher. On October 19, 1777, John Wesley entered in his journal: "I went forward to Taunton with Dr. Coke, who, being dismissed from his curacy has bid adieu to his honorable name and determined to cast his lot with us."

Dr. Coke became Wesley's main lieutenant. In the absence of Wesley he presided over the quarterly meetings and the annual conferences of the preachers. When the American Methodists begged Wesley to give them an ecclesiastical status, Wesley ordained Coke as the first superintendent of the Methodists in the New World and instructed him to go to America and form the scattered Methodist societies into an ecclesiastical organization. At the Christmas Conference the American Methodist preachers selected Coke as one of the superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

It was not his performance of the normal duties of the episcopacy that endeared Coke to the American Methodists. In fact, his almost continual absences from America and his inability to understand the democratic spirit of the American preachers made Coke very unpopular as a bishop. It was rather Coke's great mission-

ary passion that gave him a part in the romance of American Methodism. While Francis Asbury was organizing the forces of Methodism in the New World, Coke was endeavoring to carry the Methodist message to distant parts of the world. From 1784 until his death in 1814 Coke gave his fortune and time and finally his life to the cause of Christian missions.

It was at the Christmas Conference that Coke began his missionary work. At his suggestion a collection was raised for Methodist activities in Nova Scotia. Concerning this Coke wrote in his journal: "One of the week days, at noon, I made a collection toward assisting our brethren who were going to Nova Scotia; and our friends generously contributed fifty pounds currency (thirty pounds sterling)." Thus it was at the very beginning of the Methodist Episcopal Church that Coke launched his great missionary program.

In order to secure further assistance for the Methodist cause in Nova Scotia, Coke returned to England in June, 1785. The English Methodists responded so liberally to his missionary appeal that in September, 1786, Coke with three missionaries started for Nova Scotia. Because of storms at sea the ship on which Coke traveled never arrived at Nova Scotia, but instead reached the island of Antigua in the West Indies. The people of Antigua upon learning of Coke's mission urged him to remain with them. Coke was unable to grant this request, but he left at Antigua one of the missionaries originally designed for Nova Scotia.

This accidental visit to the West Indies caused Coke to realize the religious needs of the whites and the Negro slaves on these islands. He returned to England to solicit aid for Methodist missionary work in the West In-

dies. He was successful in his quest. In December, 1788, Coke returned to the West Indies with three missionaries. In order to promote his missionary program in Nova Scotia and in the West Indies Coke made nine voyages to the New World. He gave more of his time to these projects than he did to the episcopal supervision of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

After the Methodist missions were established in the New World Coke turned his attention to Africa. He had learned that in a certain part of that continent there were people called the Foulahs, who in contrast with other Africans were of gentle and tractable nature. Coke therefore believed that they would gladly embrace Christianity and he began to solicit financial assistance for a Methodist mission station in Africa. In February, 1796, he was able to send six families to Africa to work with the Foulahs. These persons, however, never reached the Foulah country. Dissensions in the ranks of the missionaries brought failure to the project. "I am sorry to say," wrote an observer to Coke, "that most of the persons you chose for the propagation of the Gospel in the Foulah country, in Africa, have manifested to the world that they are strangers to the power of it themselves." Coke refused to be discouraged over the failure. Fifteen years later under Coke's supervision four Methodist missionaries went to Africa. At Sierra Leone a successful mission was established.

Bishop Coke also endeavored to propagate vital Christianity among the French. At the beginning of the French Revolution Coke felt that the propitious moment had arrived for the establishment of a Protestant mission in France. In 1791 Coke with the aid of another missionary began to hold divine services in the city of Paris,



but the citizens were too excited about the revolution to give thought to religion. Coke was forced to leave Paris, but a few years later in an unexpected way Coke was able to reach the French. During the Napoleonic Wars thousands of French prisoners were kept on board British ships in the Medway river and along the coast of England. Coke at once saw an opportunity for Christian service. Personally bearing all financial obligations Coke sent Methodist missionaries to preach to the French prisoners. The plan was so successful that at the close of the Napoleonic struggle some of the French prisoners established Methodism in Paris. Thus by an indirect method Coke's program for the evangelization of the Parisians was begun.

Coke also became interested in the British soldiers stationed at Gibraltar. As early as 1800 he urged the English Methodist Conference to make Gibraltar a mission station. In 1804 Coke appointed James McMullen as missionary to Gibraltar, but upon his arrival there McMullen fell a victim to a yellow fever epidemic. Coke, however, refused to accept this defeat. A few years later he was able to establish a Methodist mission at Gibraltar.

Although Coke was primarily interested in foreign missionary enterprises, yet he did not overlook the religious needs of his own country. He realized that there were thousands of people in England, Ireland, and Wales, who though living in nominal Christian lands were never touched by the Christian message. Coke therefore began to send laborers into the out-of-way places and unfrequented districts of the British Isles. Missionaries were chosen for Ireland and Wales who could speak the native language of the Irish and the Welsh. The results of this home missionary work were astounding. In 1813 there

were 28,770 Methodists in Ireland, the greater number of which had been converted under Coke's missionaries. In 1810 there were sixty Methodist chapels and thirty-six native Methodist preachers in Wales. In 1807 thirty-seven Methodist missionaries were preaching in the neglected rural sections of England.

In order to execute Coke's missionary program large sums of money were needed annually. Coke, however, never failed in financing any of his projects. The English Methodists contributed liberally, but they were on account of financial reasons unable to authorize all of Coke's proposals. Coke would then appeal to the people of England. He literally begged from house to house. Larrabee says of Coke, "He became so well known over the kingdom, that whoever saw him coming knew at once his errand, and prepared to get off as lightly as possible. There was no escape from the doctor. When he got after a man for a missionary contribution he would have him, and only let him off for a liberal ransom." Coke not only asked others to contribute but he also sacrificed his own means. At his death he had given away the fortune bequeathed to him by his father. Stevens declares that it is doubtful whether any Protestant of Coke's day contributed more from his own property for the spread of the gospel than did Coke. In 1805 Coke married Penelope Smith, a lady of wealth. Before her death she had donated her fortune for missionary purposes. In 1811 Coke remarried, and his second wife also contributed liberally of her property for the expansion of Christianity. Upham has truly remarked that Coke during his life gave away three fortunes in the propagation of the Christian message.

Coke's last missionary endeavor was the attempt to carry the gospel to India. As early as 1786 he had written: "As soon as the extraordinary calls from America are answered, I trust we shall be able to turn our thoughts to Bengal." It was not, however, until 1813 that Coke was able to start to India. In that year he informed the English Methodist Conference that he had secured the services of a number of men who were willing to accompany him to Ceylon. When the preachers informed Coke that they were unable because of lack of funds to approve this mission, Coke offered to contribute the sum of \$30,000 toward the expenses. Friends begged Coke not to go to India. They declared that Coke at the age of sixty-six could not bear the hardships of a long ocean voyage and the privations of a distant country. Coke replied, "I am now dead to Europe, and alive for India. God himself has said to me: 'Go to Ceylon.' I am so fully convinced of the will of God that methinks I had rather be set naked on the coast of Ceylon and without a friend than not go there."

The great missionary bishop never reached India. He died on May 3, 1814, while sailing in the Indian Ocean. As the ship was then in equatorial waters it was impossible to preserve Coke's body and take it back to England. So on the afternoon of May 3, 1814, Coke's funeral service was held at high sea and the physical remains of the good bishop were lowered into a watery grave, to await the day when 'the earth and the sea give up their dead.'

Although Coke was a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, yet his influence extended far beyond America. The last appointment given Coke by the English Methodist Conference read thus: "Asia, Ceylon: Thomas

Coke, LL.D., who is the general superintendent of our Asiatic missions." As Fitchett has stated, Coke gave Methodism geographical range. He forbade it to be insular.

## § 2. IN CULTURED NEW ENGLAND

The enemies of early Methodism were willing to admit that the Wesleyan movement might temporarily be successful, but only because of its appeal to ignorant people. Those same persons, however, predicted that Methodism would eventually fail because it was repulsive to cultured people; to individuals with refined tastes. Such views were held especially by the Calvinists of New England. They looked with disdain upon Methodism. They felt that their section of America because of its intellectual background would be immune from the Methodist enthusiasm.

The American Methodists, however, believed with John Wesley that the whole world was their parish. They did not recognize sectional or geographical limits but went wherever there was a need of vital religion. Hence they entered New England. The Methodists realized that although outwardly New England appeared religious, yet in reality it was devoid of spirituality. The support of the Congregational Church by state funds had tended to destroy the zeal of the Puritan clergy and to cause them to lose intimate contact with the masses. The deism and rationalism which became so prevalent in America at the close of the eighteenth century had deeply affected New England. Universalism and Unitarianism had arisen there as protests against rigid Calvinism. The decline in religion had been accompanied by a lowering of morals. In fact, religion in New England had at the close of the

American Revolution become so lifeless and so ineffective that Mudge could declare: "The itinerant Methodists were nearly as much needed in New England as in the West." Bishop Asbury once wrote in his journal: "I believe, for one, that there has been more true Gospel preaching in the other States, than in the five New-England States, for all their boasting."

Among all the American itinerants there was one man, Jesse Lee, who felt called to be the apostle of Methodism to Puritan New England. Lee was born in Prince George county, Virginia, March 12, 1758. He was converted when eighteen years of age, became a class leader before he was twenty and at twenty-one became a Methodist local preacher. He entered the itinerancy in 1783. While traveling with Bishop Asbury in South Carolina in 1785 Lee met at Cheraw a man from Massachusetts who gave him information in regard to the people and conditions in New England. This conversation caused Lee to become so interested in those Northern States that he at once asked Bishop Asbury to send him there. The bishop replied that the time was not yet ready for such a move. Six years later, however, Asbury granted Lee's request.

The Methodist invasion of New England began when at an annual conference in New York in May, 1789, Bishop Asbury created a new circuit to which he assigned Jesse Lee. This circuit, named Stamford, included all of New England. Concerning this action, Asbury recorded in his journal: "New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry, and I trust thousands will shortly feel its influence." The decision to enter New England was a brave act, since no other denomination had been able to cope in New England with the Congregational Church. Asbury, however, was not afraid to compete with that

church for he entered in his journal: "They have trodden upon the Quakers, the Episcopalians, the Baptists—see now if the Methodists do not work their way."

It was at Norwalk, Connecticut, on June 17, 1789, that Jesse Lee started his work in New England. He received a cold reception at the first home at which he called. "When I came," said Lee, "Mrs. Rogers told me her husband was from home, and was not willing for me to preach in his house. I told her we would hold meeting in the road rather than give any uneasiness. We proposed speaking in an old house that stood just by, but she was not willing. I then spoke to an old lady for permission to preach in her orchard, but she would not consent, because she said, we would tread the grass down." Lee was finally forced to preach his first sermon in New England on the streets of Norwalk. His text was "Ye must be born again." Of this experience Lee wrote: "Most of the congregation paid particular attention to what I sa'd, and two or three women seemed to hang down their heads, as if they understood something of the new birth."

During the conference year Lee carried the banner of Methodism throughout a large part of New England. In sixteen months he traveled several thousand miles and preached in every state of New England. Success attended his labors. At Stratfield, Connecticut, on September 26, 1789, Lee organized the first Methodist society in New England. It was composed of three women. So effective was his work that at the close of the year Lee could report that there were one hundred and eighty-one Methodists in New England. Lee, elated over that progress, wrote: "I stand amazed at myself, and astonished at the goodness of God to me."

Lee's success caused Bishop Asbury in 1790 to put all of New England into one Methodist district and to appoint Lee as the first presiding elder of that region. In the same year four preachers were sent to help Lee. Asbury in 1791 made his first episcopal tour of New England. During that year the first Methodist society in Massachusetts was organized. By July, 1792, a Methodist society was started in Boston. The first annual conference of New England Methodism met in August, 1792. Three years later the cornerstone was laid at Lynn, Massachusetts for the initial Methodist house of worship in New England. Lee remained in New England eight years. When he went in 1797 to other fields of labor, there were thirty-four Methodist preachers and three thousand nine hundred and thirty-nine laymen there. In 1800 there were already six thousand Methodists in New England.

Such progress was made in the face of strong opposition. When it became known that the initial Methodist society had been organized at Stratfield, forty-five preachers and ninety deacons held a convention to decide upon a concerted action against Methodism. Calvinistic leaders denounced the Methodists as intruders, as false prophets, and as "wolves in sheep's clothing." The Methodist ministers were denied ordinary hospitality. After preaching in New Haven, Connecticut, Lee wrote: "Some told me they were pleased with the discourse; but no man asked me home with him." Lee preached for over a half year at Fairfield, Connecticut, before he was invited into any home. After a visit to Boston, Bishop Asbury wrote: "Of their hospitality I cannot boast; in Charleston, wicked Charleston, six years ago, a stranger, I was kindly invited to eat and drink by many—here by none."

Concerning the severe treatment received by Methodist preachers in New England, Stevens has written: "Washburn was hooted through the villages, Hedding cursed with outcries in the highway; Dow's nose was publicly wrung; Sabin was knocked down and struck on the head to the peril of his life with the butt of a gun; Wood was horsewhipped; Christie summoned out of bed to answer a charge of violating the laws of marrying a couple of his people; Willard wounded in the eye by a blow; the effect of which was seen through his life; Mudge denied the rights of a clergyman and arraigned before the magistrate for assuming them; Kirby stoned while preaching and Taylor drummed out of town." Such opposition did not, however, daunt the Methodists. It served only to advertise them. Lee always found that wherever he was most opposed, he likewise had the most listeners.

Lee was an ideal man to carry Methodism to New England. His wit, humor, and cheerful temperament enabled him to face the coldness of New England Calvinism. Even his enemies admitted that he was a master of repartee. Among the many stories told about Lee in New England is one that exemplifies how he secured privileges even among his opponents. At one town he requested of the Congregational clergyman the use of his church for a divine service. In order to test Lee's education, the minister asked him a question in Latin. Lee was unacquainted with that language, but answered him in "Pennsylvania Dutch" which he had learned while among the Germans in North Carolina and Virginia. The preacher was then chagrined for he had never heard that dialect before. He repeated his question in Greek. Lee answered as before. The surprised minister came to the conclusion that Lee was speaking in Hebrew, and therefore decided



that Lee must be an exceptionally well educated man. He therefore permitted Lee to preach in his church.

Lee's experience with two lawyers in New England is perhaps the most famous story told concerning him. Those men, seeing Lee ahead of them rode up with the plan of making sport of him. The following conversation ensued:

"Good morning, Mr. Lee, you are a preacher, I think."

"Yes, I pass for a preacher."

"Have you a liberal education?"

"I have enough to get over the country; but nothing to boast of."

"You preach without notes, I understand."

"Yes, preaching every day, and riding long distances, I have no time to write sermons, and besides I do not approve of reading sermons."

"Are you not liable to make mistakes?"

"O, yes, I often make mistakes."

"Do you correct them as you proceed?"

"Why, that depends wholly on the character of the mistake. If the mistake be a bad one, and liable to lead the hearer to any essential error or misconception of the subject, I recall the word and correct the mistake immediately; but if it be only a slip of the tongue, and very near the truth, only a slight variation in phraseology, I let it go. For example, I was about to say the other day, the devil is a liar and the father of liars, and by a mere slip of the tongue I said, the devil is a lawyer and the father of lawyers. But the thing was so nearly correct, being in fact the truth, but only a little varying in phraseology from what I would have said, that I passed right on, not thinking the mistake worth correcting."

"Humph," exclaimed one of the lawyers, "I don't know whether you are more knave or fool."

"Neither," retorted Lee, looking from one lawyer to the other, "I believe I am just between the two."

This witty apostle of Methodism served New England for eight years. That, however, was only one of his many contributions to Methodism. He had the honor of writing the first history of American Methodism. At the General Conference of 1800 Lee lacked only three votes of being elected bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. On three occasions he served as chaplain of the National House of Representatives. Lee also was for one term the chaplain of the United States Senate.

Although the New England Methodists received help from the other sections of American Methodism, especially from the Southern conferences, yet these contributions of men and money were returned to the Church many times over. New England at first made fun of Methodism, and then turned around and aided Methodism. Nathan Bangs, who founded the Methodist Review and the Christian Advocate, was a New Englander. Zion's Herald, the first Methodist weekly periodical, was published at Boston. Wilbur Fisk, one of the few men to twice decline the Methodist episcopacy, was a product of New England. Joshua Soule, the man who at the age of twenty-seven wrote the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was born in Maine. The first Methodist theological seminary in America was founded at Concord, New Hampshire. New England also furnished for the pioneer foreign missionary work of Methodism three men: Melville B. Cox, Justin Spaulding, and William Butler. Yes, the land of Puritanism repaid the loan of Jesse Lee.

## § 3. THE GERMAN METHODISTS

John Wesley was greatly influenced by German people. The German Moravians especially affected him. The piety and faith of the Moravians whom Wesley met en route to Georgia in 1735 caused him to examine his own spiritual state. It was August Gottlieb Spangenberg, a German Moravian missionary, who made Wesley realize the need of a deeper faith. Peter Bohler, another Moravian missionary, told Wesley how to come into intimate contact with his Saviour. Wesley was listening to the reading of Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans when his heart was "strangely warmed."

The early American Methodists repaid this obligation to the German people by carrying the gospel to the Germans who came to the New World. As late as 1813 James B. Finley met an aged German in Ohio who had been converted under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge. Bishop Asbury, although he could not preach in the German language, often visited German settlements. On such occasions, Henry Boehm, his traveling companion, would preach. By the year 1810 Boehm had preached to Germans in about fourteen different states.

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ was originally composed of German people who accepted the Methodist discipline and doctrine. The founder of that church was Philip William Otterbein, a minister of the German Reformed Church, who came to America in 1752. The use by Otterbein of class meetings and other Methodist practices caused him to become unpopular in the German Reformed Church. He therefore became in 1774 the pastor of an independent German Reformed Church in Baltimore. In that church Otterbein was able to propagate his evangelical principles.

Francis Asbury met Otterbein on May 4, 1774. After their conference Asbury wrote in his journal: "Had a friendly intercourse with Mr. O. and Mr. S., the German ministers, respecting the plan of Church discipline on which they intend to proceed. They agreed to imitate our methods as nearly as possible." A great friendship arose between Asbury and Otterbein. Asbury declared that there were very few men with whom he could find so much unity and freedom in conversation as with Otterbein. When Asbury was elected superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church he asked that Otterbein assist in his consecration.

Otterbein's influence among the German people spread from Baltimore to German settlements in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Religious societies were formed by Otterbein among the Germans on the basis of Methodist doctrine, polity, and discipline. Since these Germans acted so much like Methodists they were often called "Dutch Methodists."

Because of the friendship of Otterbein and Asbury it would seem that the followers of Otterbein should have become members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Asbury, however, was opposed to this move. He doubted the wisdom of using two different languages in the Methodist Episcopal Church, for he felt that a German membership would prove to be a discordant element in an English speaking church. Asbury also believed that the German language would soon cease in America and he thought it inexpedient for the Methodist Episcopal Church to encourage its use by ecclesiastical sanction. Asbury felt that the Methodist itinerants should preach only in English in order to aid in the Americanization of the foreigners. Because of Asbury's attitude Otterbein's

societies were in 1800 formed into a separate church. This church called the United Brethren in Christ adopted the Methodist system of having bishops, and of holding quarterly, annual, and general conferences. Otterbein and Martin Boehm, the father of Henry Boehm, Asbury's traveling companion, were selected as the first bishops.

Although the Methodists and the United Brethren in Christ never formed an organic union yet they ever retained the most friendly relationship. Upon the death of Otterbein in 1813 Asbury wrote: "Is Father Otterbein dead? Great and good man of God! An honor to his church and country. One of the greatest scholars and divines that ever came to America, or born in it. Alas, the chiefs of the Germans are gone to their rest and reward, taken from the evil to come." Drury, the historian of the United Brethren in Christ, declares that it is difficult today to fully appreciate the fraternal attitude of the early Methodists and United Brethren toward each other. "I can look back," wrote Spayth, one of Otterbein's preachers, "and see the smiles and cordial shakes of the hand—hands now cold in death, while mine writes and trembles—and the hearty and joyous welcome when Methodists and United Brethren met."

Jacob Albright was the leader of a second Methodist movement among the Germans. He was born of German parents in Pennsylvania in the year 1759. Upon uniting with the Methodists, Albright felt called of God to carry the Methodist message to his own people. Albright not only adopted the itinerant practices of the Methodists but he also organized his converts into groups similar to Methodist societies. He desired to bring his followers into the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Asbury, however, adopted the same policy toward Albright that he had

toward Otterbein. As a consequence of Asbury's attitude the followers of Albright were organized about 1808 into the Evangelical Association, known in more recent times as the Evangelical Church. Thus a second group of "Dutch Methodists" was forced to find an ecclesiastical refuge outside of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Asbury's prophecy that the German language would soon expire in America proved false because fifteen years after the death of Asbury German migrations to America began to assume tremendous proportions. Between 1830-1860 hundreds of thousands of German immigrants came to America. Some settled in the rural sections of the West where land was cheap, while others went to such cities as Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis. Soon in certain parts of the West the German language alone was spoken, the newspapers were printed in German, and the schools were taught by German schoolmasters.

These German immigrants needed religious assistance. Many of them were atheists. Some who had been devout in their native land seemed to lose their spirituality in the New World. Reid has described these Germans as "sheep without a shepherd—living from year to year without any religious influences." In the face of such conditions the Methodist leaders abandoned Asbury's policy and instead decided to reach the immigrants by preaching to them in the German language. It was a fortunate coincidence that at the logical moment a German by the name of William Nast offered his services to the Methodists.

William Nast, who has often been called the "Father of German Methodism," was born in Germany in the year 1807. In youth Nast decided to enter the ministry of

the Lutheran Church, but during his university career he came into contact with rationalistic professors who caused him to become an avowed rationalist. He gave up his plan of a life of Christian service. In 1828 having heard of the need in the New World for classical teachers Nast migrated to America. After he had learned the English language he became first a tutor in private homes, then a teacher of German at the Military Academy at West Point, and later a professor at Kenyon College.

As a private tutor in a Methodist home in Baltimore, Nast came into contact with the Methodists, and from the kind treatment which he received from them, he became convinced of the "folly of skepticism and resolved to try to be a Christian." Nast often declared that if when young he had been privileged to attend Methodist class meetings and love feasts he would have grown in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, and thus might have escaped the thousands of sorrows and mental gloom through which he had to pass. Nast was converted on January 17, 1835, at a quarterly meeting at Danville, Ohio. He at once determined to tell his fellow Germans of his spiritual happiness. In the same year of his conversion Nast was licensed to preach, was admitted into the Ohio Annual Conference, and was appointed as a missionary to the Germans in Cincinnati.

It was no easy task for this converted rationalist to carry the gospel to his fellow countrymen. Many of them received Nast with scorn and derision. He had to face severe hardships and difficulties. He secured only three converts during the first year of his missionary work. Nast, however, persevered in the face of discouragements. "No calumnies nor persecutions from his enemies," writes Adam Miller, "could damp the ardour of his soul, for it

burned deep with holy zeal for the salvation of his countrymen."

The German press of Cincinnati, controlled by the brewers, the atheists and the Roman Catholics, endeavored by denunciation and sarcasm to destroy Nast's work. The editors, however, had reckoned unwisely when they sought to ruin Nast by means of the press. Nast was able to answer them, for he was an educated man and an excellent writer. He could use his pen as well as his tongue in defence of Methodism. Nast was especially fitted to answer the rationalists since he had once believed in rationalism. In order therefore to counteract the influence of the German press, Nast began on January 4, 1839, the publication of **Der Christliche Apologete**, the first Methodist periodical ever published for the German people. **Der Christliche Apologete** proved to be a mighty factor for the spread of religion among the Germans in America. It has lasted to the present time.

Although it was three years before Nast was able to organize a Methodist society among the Germans, yet after that date phenomenal progress ensued. Methodist missions to the Germans were started in most of the Western cities. "We have now," stated a report of 1843, "a line of missionaries from the shore of Lake Erie to New Orleans, including most of the principal cities along the western water-courses, where the Germans are numerous." Six years later there were in the German Methodist Missions "seven thousand church members, thirty local preachers, eighty-three regular mission circuits and stations, and one hundred and eight missionaries." In 1858 there were 19,980 German speaking Methodists in the Methodist Episcopal Church, an average increase of about one thousand a year since 1838. In 1844 the Ger-



man Methodist societies were organized into German districts and in 1864 the German Methodist preachers were given the right to have their own annual conferences.

Out of the Methodist attempt to convert the German immigrants in the West came the Methodist mission to the people in Germany. Converted Germans in America wrote to friends and relatives back home, telling them what Methodism had done for them. As a result, many persons in Germany requested that the Methodist Episcopal Church send missionaries to them and in 1849 L. S. Jacoby went to Germany as the first missionary from the Methodist Episcopal Church. He began to preach in the city of Bremen. He found the people willing to listen to his message. In 1865 there were 4,650 Methodists in Germany.

Yes, the American Methodists rewarded the German people for their good influence upon John Wesley. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church exist today because Philip William Otterbein and Jacob Albright propagated Methodist doctrine, discipline and polity among their fellow Germans. The thousands of modern Methodists with German names bespeak the work of William Nast and his successors among the German immigrants. The German Moravians taught Wesley that salvation came through a simple faith in Jesus Christ. In like manner the American Methodists gave to the German immigrant a vital type of religion. Many Germans, says Adam Miller, "will thank God in time and eternity, that the Methodist Episcopal Church ever sent her missionaries among them."

## § 4. THE COLORED BRETHREN

On November 29, 1758, John Wesley baptized his first Negro convert. He wrote in his journal: "I rode to Wandsworth and baptized two negroes belonging to Mr. Gilbert, a gentleman lately come from Antigua. One of these is deeply convicted of sin, the other rejoices in God her Saviour, and is the first African Christian I have known. But shall not our Lord, in due time, have these heathen for His inheritance?"

Eight years after Wesley had expressed the hope that God might have the Negroes for his inheritance the American Methodists began to carry the gospel to them. "Betty," a colored servant, was one of the five persons that heard Philip Embury deliver the first Methodist sermon in New York City. When Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor preached in New York they were surprised at the large number of blacks that attended the meetings. Pilmoor wrote in 1770 to Wesley: "Even some of the poor despised children of Ham are striving to wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. We have a number of black women, who meet together every week, many of whom are happy in the love of God." Thus at the very beginning of American Methodism colored people listened to and were helped by the messages of the itinerants.

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 the preachers continued this interest in Negro evangelization. Question 41 of the Discipline adopted at the Christmas Conference was: "Are there any directions to be given concerning the negroes?" The answer was, "Let every preacher, as often as possible, meet them in class. And let the assistant always appoint a proper

white person as their leader. Let the assistants also make a regular return to the conference of the number of negroes in society in their respective circuits." Three years later the Methodists made another move which has been described as "the first decisive step toward evangelization of the slaves." In answer to the question, "What directions shall we give for the promotion of the spiritual welfare of the colored people?" the Discipline stated that the preachers were to leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation of the colored people within their respective circuits or districts. They were instructed to meet with the Negroes in class meetings, and to offer them membership in the societies.

Francis Asbury, as bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, not only urged the ministers to preach to the Negroes but he also personally found time to carry the Christian message to the blacks. His journal makes many allusions to the poor slaves. While in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1796, he wrote: "I had nearly two hundred and fifty of the African society at the love-feast held for them in the evening." A few days later Asbury stated that he "was happy last evening with the poor slaves in brother Wells' kitchen, whilst our white brother held a sacramental love feast in the front parlor up stairs." On another occasion he entered in his journal: "I have to meet the African people every morning between five and six o'clock, at my lodging, with singing, reading, exhortation and prayer."

A famous Negro preacher by the name of Harry Hosier, usually called Black Harry, accompanied Bishop Asbury on many of his episcopal journeys. Hosier could neither read nor write, but he had such a gift of exhortation that Asbury used him as the preacher to the blacks.

When Asbury was ill he would have Hosier fill his appointments. Asbury once declared that the best way to secure a large audience was to announce that Black Harry would preach. Hosier's power as a preacher is shown by an incident that occurred at Wilmington, Delaware. A group of men, unable to secure seats in the Methodist chapel, had listened on the outside to a sermon which they thought was being delivered by Bishop Asbury. The speaker, however, was Harry Hosier. At the conclusion of the service, the men remarked: "If all Methodist preachers could preach like the bishop we would like to be constant hearers." They were informed that the preacher was not the bishop but his Negro servant. Their answer was, "If such be the servant what must the master be?"

Methodism made phenomenal progress among the blacks. In fact in some parts of America the Methodist Episcopal Church was called the "nigger church" because it attracted so many slaves. In 1786 there were 1,890 colored Methodists in America. By 1790 this number had increased to 11,682. From 1790 to 1810 one-fifth of the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church consisted of Negroes.

The fraternal spirit of the Methodist preachers accounts largely for the rapid growth of Methodism among the slaves. "The Methodist itinerants," says Harrison, "having their hearts aglow with the pure missionary fire, preached to all alike. 'Christ came into the world to die for every sinner,' were the broad and liberal words emblazoned upon their shields. Everywhere that Methodism went, it went in that spirit. It was the religion for the rich and the poor, for the black and the white, for master and slave; in short, for all."

Methodism also appealed to the Negroes because it gave to the slaves what they desired, namely, an emotional type of religion. Price declares that Methodism with its extemporaneous preaching and warm gushing religious experience was peculiarly adapted to the colored man. The shouts and hymns of Methodism set the slaves afire with religious enthusiasm. The Methodist ministers instead of delivering scholarly addresses explained to their ignorant listeners in simple language the message of Christianity.

In pioneer American Methodism the whites and blacks belonged to the same societies and attended the same services, although the Negroes were expected to take seats in the gallery or at the rear of the church. Jones writes that in early Mississippi Methodism the colored members "were admitted to church membership, had access to the sacraments and social meetings of the church, and were cared for by every pastor as a legitimate part of his charge." On December 3, 1809, Bishop Asbury was at Camden, South Carolina. He wrote in his journal: "I preached in the tabernacle to about five hundred people, and as we had two distinct congregations in the house, I dropped a word of advice to the poor Africans in presence of the whites."

Although the circuit riders were allowed to preach to the free Negroes and to the slaves on the small farms, yet it was nearly fifty years after the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church before they were able to reach the slaves on the large Southern plantations. This was due to the fact that the early Methodist preachers were thought to be abolitionists. Certain Methodist legislation plus some injudicious statements of Bishop Coke on the subject of slavery were responsible for this view-

point. Southern planters were suspicious of the Methodist itinerants. They feared that the Methodist doctrines might cause their slaves to rebel. Bishop Asbury once wrote: "We are defrauded of great numbers by the pains that are taken to keep the blacks from us; their masters are afraid of the influence of our principles."

Time removed the opposition of the large slave holders to Methodism. Southern planters came to realize that the Methodist preachers could be of great assistance in elevating the moral condition of their slaves. Men who had formerly denounced Methodism began to ask that Methodist itinerants be sent to their plantations. Therefore in 1829 in answer to the application of several South Carolina plantation owners for Methodist missionaries to their slaves, the South Carolina Annual Conference organized three slave missions and appointed three preachers as missionaries to the slaves within the South Carolina Conference. William Capers, to whom the planters had made their application for ministerial help, was made superintendent of these slave missions.

Success attended the missionary labors of the Methodists of South Carolina. Four hundred and seventeen blacks were converted during the first year of the slave missions. Outstanding social and political leaders of South Carolina asked for Methodist missionaries to come to their plantations. Although most of the planters were members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, yet they built Methodist chapels on their plantations and contributed to the support of the missions. In 1838 the Methodist work embraced two hundred and thirty-four plantations. There were at that date 5,556 slaves under the pastoral care of the South Carolina Conference and in addition 2,525 children were receiving catechetical instruction.

The success of the Methodist labors with the slaves of South Carolina was due largely to William Capers. He was especially fitted to be the superintendent of the slave missions. Capers belonged to a distinguished aristocratic family and was himself a slaveholder. During the period in which he lived he was next to John C. Calhoun the most popular man in South Carolina. Not only did the planters have confidence in Capers, but he was also deeply interested in elevating the moral and religious life of the slaves. He prepared several catechisms for the slaves. "The Founder of Missions to the Slaves in South Carolina" was part of the epitaph placed on Caper's tombstone.

Other conferences adopted the plan of sending missionaries to the large plantations. In 1844, fifteen years after the South Carolina Conference began the experiment, there were sixty-eight slave missions. Seventy-one Methodist preachers were serving as missionaries to the slaves. In 1844 the slave missions had a membership of 21,063. The work had extended to every Methodist conference in the Southern States.

It was no easy task to carry the Christian message to the slaves. It took patience to bear with their superstition and ignorance. The missionaries endeavored to teach the slaves by the catechetical method, but they often were forced to despair of achieving any results. Once when a missionary asked the question: "What is the meaning of 'thou shalt not commit adultery?'" one of the blacks answered: "To serve our Heavenly Father, and our earthly master, obey our overseer and not steal anything." In answer to the question, "What did God make you for?" a slave replied, "To make a crop." Yet it was the best preachers in the Methodist Episcopal Church that labored

with the slaves. William Capers and J. O. Andrew, both of whom became Methodist bishops, considered it a privilege to carry the gospel to the colored people.

Christian heroism was exemplified by the Methodist missionaries to the slaves. "Not counting their lives dear unto themselves," wrote an observer of that period, "they go where malaria and death hold their carnival through the summer and autumn months. In spite of burning heat, of pestilential vapors, shaking agues, and malignant fevers, they wend their way from plantation to plantation and from hut to hut. Now in some low, closed, well smoked cabin, filled with infectious air, a dying slave languishes upon a pallet of straw. The self-forgetting man of God kneels by his side, and points him to the sinner's Friend." It has been truthfully stated that without the labors of those noble missionaries, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would have been devoid of interest.

The Negroes never forgot the unselfish spirit and the brotherly attitude shown to them by the pioneer Methodists. Even when released from bondage they remained true to the Methodist principles which they learned as slaves. Groups of Negroes for various reasons separated from the mother Church but they retained the polity, theology and enthusiasm of the first American Methodists. Richard Allen, who became the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, expressed in the following tribute the gratitude of his race to the Methodists: "The Methodists were the first people that brought glad tidings to the colored people. I feel thankful that I ever heard a Methodist preacher. We are beholden to the Methodists, under God, for the light of the Gospel we enjoy; for all other denominations preached so high flown that we were not able to comprehend their doctrine."



## § 5. WITH THE RED MEN

"I wrote a letter to Cornplanter, chief of the Seneca nation of Indians. I hope God will shortly visit these outcasts of men, and send messengers to publish the glad tidings of salvation amongst them." In this statement made five years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Francis Asbury expressed his friendly interest in the aborigines of America. He longed to offer them the Christian message. Asbury believed that John Wesley's declaration, "I look upon all the world as my parish," applied to the red men as well as to the whites and the blacks.

The dream of Asbury for Methodist evangelization of the Indians was not realized in his lifetime. There were too many hindrances. Until 1819 there was not a Methodist missionary society in America, and the preachers were too busy on their large circuits to give attention to the Indians. The language problem, the latent hostility of the Indians for the whites, and the wars on the frontier were other impediments to missionary work among the Indians.

It was almost thirty years after Asbury wrote his letter to Cornplanter before the Methodists began their labors with the American Indians. It was then an illiterate negro, by the name of John Stewart, who aroused the Methodists to their duty to the aborigines. Stewart had drifted from Virginia to Marietta, Ohio, where he had become a very dissipated individual. Becoming dissatisfied with life, Stewart in a drunken state started one night toward the Ohio river to drown himself. On the way there he was forced to pass by a Methodist church where Marcus Lindsey was preaching. The noise of the service attracted the

drunken negro. He paused at the entrance and as he did so he heard Lindsey describe the precarious condition of sinners. Stewart tarried long enough, however, to hear the minister tell how sinners might repent, how the death of the Saviour gave hope to the lowliest man. The brief message so impressed Stewart that he shortly after was converted and became a devout Methodist.

Soon after his conversion Stewart felt a divine call to be a missionary to the Indians. According to Stewart he had a series of visions that influenced this decision. "It seemed to me," said Stewart, "that I heard a voice, like the voice of a woman praising God; and then another, as the voice of a man saying to me, 'You must declare my counsel faithfully.' These voices rang through me powerfully. They seemed to come from a north-west direction. . . . This circumstance made a strong impression on my mind, and seemed an indication to me that the Lord had called me to warn sinners to flee the wrath to come. But I felt myself poor and ignorant, that I feared much to make any attempt, though I was continually drawn to travel toward the course from which the voices seem to come. I, at length concluded, that if God would enable me to pay my debts, which I had contracted in the days of my wickedness and folly, I would go."

After Stewart had settled his obligations he started in the fall of 1817 toward the northwestern part of Ohio. After much wandering Stewart reached the Upper Sandusky region where the Wyandotte Indians were located. There he was fortunate in finding Jonathan Pointer, a Negro who had been a prisoner among the Wyandottes for many years. Pointer became Stewart's interpreter. Only two Indians, a chief by the name of Big Tree and an old woman listened to Stewart's first sermon. Stewart's abil-

ity, however, as a singer attracted the Indians. They soon began to listen to his message in song although they refused for a time to hear his sermons.

The lot of this first missionary to the Indians was not easy. The older chiefs warned the Wyandottes of the tribulation which awaited them if they forsook the Great Spirit. The whites who profited by the sale of intoxicating liquors to the Indians opposed Stewart as did also the Roman Catholic priests. In spite of these difficulties Stewart continued bravely in his work. He began to secure converts, one of whom was a prominent chief, Between-the-Logs. This Indian later related the story of the experiences of the negro missionary among his people. "He began," said Between-the-Logs, "to talk, and sing and pray; but we thought it was all nothing, and many made fun of him because he was a black man. The white traders told us we ought to drive him away; for the white people would not let a black man preach for them. We, however, watched his walk, and found that he walked straight, and did all as he said. At last the word took hold, and many began to listen, and believed it was right, and soon began to pray, and we found that it was of God. Then others came, and they told us the same things. The work broke out, and God has done great things for us."

The labors of Stewart among the Wyandottes attracted the attention of the Methodist leaders. The Ohio Annual Conference of 1818 after listening to Bishop McKendree's portrayal of Stewart's activities, contributed funds for sending a missionary to the Wyandottes. One year later the Wyandotte Mission was placed under the supervision of the Ohio Annual Conference. In March, 1820, a quarterly conference at Urbana, Ohio, licensed Stewart as a lay preacher. Stewart remained with the Wyandottes

until near his death in December, 1823. In that year there were one hundred and fifty-four Methodists among the Wyandottes.

It was Stewart's services to the Indians that caused the formation of the first Methodist missionary society in America. In far away New York, Gabriel Disoway, a pious Methodist layman, upon hearing of the triumphs of Stewart, secured the assistance of Dr. Nathan Bangs in organizing a society for the promotion of Methodist missionary work, both at home and in foreign countries. As a result of this agitation by Disoway and Bangs, there was founded in New York City, on April 5, 1819, the Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1820 the General Conference officially adopted that society. One prime object of the organization was the evangelization of the natives of the forests.

Stewart's contributions proved an impetus to Methodist missionary work among the Indians in other parts of America. In 1821 the South Carolina Conference sent William Capers, later Bishop Capers, as missionary to the Creek Indians, located in Georgia and Alabama. Near the present site of Columbus, Georgia, Capers started the Asbury Manual Labor School for Indian youths. In 1822 Richard Neely of the Tennessee Conference began to preach to the Cherokees in North Alabama and by 1830 there were eight hundred and fifty-five Cherokee Methodists. In 1827 Alexander Talley was appointed by the Mississippi Annual Conference to work among the Choctaws in Mississippi. The Missionary and Bible Society in its fifth annual report could state that the Methodist missionaries had proven that it was possible through the power of the gospel, to reclaim the Indians from heathenism and to bring them under the influence of Chris-

tian principles. In 1832 the American Methodists were supporting seventeen Indian Missions.

Indian evangelization by the Methodists was given a renewed enthusiasm by a historic event that occurred among the Flat Head Indians of the Oregon Country. Some of the Flat Head braves, during a visit to Canada, had heard about Christianity. The message which they brought back caused their tribe to desire further information about this new religion. It happened that shortly after that date some traders came to the Flat Heads and when questioned concerning Christianity they replied that if the Flat Heads traveled toward the "rising sun" they would find a book which would give them the Truth. The Flat Heads accordingly sent four of their number eastward in search of this book. Upon their arrival in St. Louis, they came in contact with Roman Catholics, and therefore they never secured the Bible. Two of the delegation died while at St. Louis. Before the other two returned to their tribe, it is reported that one of them in giving farewell to the people whom he had met at St. Louis, spoke as follows: "I came to you over the long trail of many moons from the setting sun. I made my way with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry much back to them. I go back to them with both arms broke and empty. My people sent me to get the white man's book of heaven. You took me to where they worship the Great Spirit with candles, and the book was not there. You showed me pictures of the good spirits and of the good land beyond, but the book was not among them to tell us the way. I am going back the long and sad trail to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts and my moccasins will grow old in carrying them, yet the book is not among them. When I

tell my people, after one more snow, in the big council, that I did not bring the book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they will rise up and go out in silence. My people will die in darkness and go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them, and no white man's book to make the way plain. I have no more words."

This episode appealed to the heroic spirit of President Wilbur Fisk of Wesleyan University. He therefore published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* and *Zion's Herald* for March 22, 1833, a letter with the following heading: **HEAR! HEAR! WHO WILL RESPOND TO THE CALL BEYOND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS?** Fisk called for young men to go as missionaries to those Flat Heads who had searched in vain for the white man's Bible. No second appeal had to be made for volunteers. Jason Lee and his nephew, Daniel Lee, at once offered their services to the Church. In September, 1834, these men arrived in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, where they began their missionary labors among the Flat Heads. During the year 1834, the Methodists, due to their interest in the Flat Heads, doubled their contributions for missions.

With such a large amount of labor and money expended by the Methodists upon the red men of America, it is sad to realize that the work was almost in vain. There were very few lasting results from the heroic efforts of the missionaries. The failure, however, was not due to the lack of zeal and piety on the part of the Methodists. There were many obstacles in the way of success. It was difficult for interpreters to fully express the Methodist preacher's message. As Jewell says, "It was like putting

a steam engine to a common road wagon. They ran away from their interpreters. . . .” The good accomplished by the Methodists was often counteracted by the evil influence of unscrupulous whites who preyed upon the Indians. The missionaries soon realized that no positive results could be obtained as long as liquor was sold to the Indians. The Methodist program unfortunately was promoted at the time when the Eastern Indians were being removed by the federal government to land across the Mississippi river. The constant threat of removal caused the Indians not only to be restless and discontented but also to be indifferent to religion and education.

While the Methodists were discouraged over the results of their missionary labors among the Indians, yet their work assumed larger proportions than did that of any other Protestant denomination. In 1854 when there were 7,372 Indian Methodists, the other Protestant churches combined had only 4,945 members among the Indians. Although the Methodists never made the progress with the Red Men as they did with the Negroes, yet those pioneer Methodists endeavored as best they could to carry out the wish expressed by good Bishop Asbury when he wrote to Cornplanter in 1789.

## § 6. STARTING THE WORLD PARISH

“I look upon all the world as my parish,” were the immortal words of John Wesley, but the missionary sentiment that caused them to be spoken became the possession of all Methodists. No geographical limits have ever been accepted by the followers of Wesley in their attempt to spread Scriptural holiness. Especially was this true of the pioneer American Methodists. In the face of dis-

couragements and hardships they laid the foundation of the world parish of Methodism.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was almost forty-eight years old before its first missionary sailed for a foreign land, but there were many reasons to account for the delay. The dire religious conditions of America immediately after the Revolutionary War was a challenge to the Methodists. The circuit riders as they carried the gospel to the frontier were missionaries in the truest sense of the word. There were on American soil thousands of Negro slaves and Indians who were strangers to the Christian message. The Methodists also for many years were without financial resources for a foreign missionary program. It is really marvelous that so much was done by the first American Methodists for the spiritual welfare of the frontiersmen, the slaves and the aborigines.

An impetus was given to Methodist missionary work in 1819 by the organization of the first missionary society of American Methodism. A layman, Gabriel P. Disoway, a young merchant of New York City, was largely instrumental in founding the society. Disoway had heard of the religious work of John Stewart with the Wyandotte Indians. The labors of that ignorant but redeemed Negro appealed to the heroic element in Disoway. He therefore urged Dr. Nathan Bangs, a prominent clergyman of New York City to form a Methodist society that would sponsor missionary work. As a result of the agitation of Disoway, Bangs, and others, there was organized in New York on April 5, 1819, the Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The first Methodist missionary society had to face many hardships and much opposition. Some Methodists objected to any organized plan of promoting missionary



work; others claimed that the Church was too poor to support such a society; and many were too busy with other projects to give concern to the missionary cause. Only \$823.64 was collected by the society during the first year. Yet in the face of discouragements, there were some leaders who never lost faith. During the darkest moments in the history of this missionary society, Joshua Soule bravely declared: "The time will come when every man who assisted in the organization of this society, and persevered in the undertaking, will consider it one of the most honorable periods of his life."

It was fortunate for the missionary cause of Methodism that the General Conference of 1820 officially approved the New York Missionary Society. Not only did the General Conference sanction the movement but the committee on missions made an historic report, which recognized the obligation of Methodism to spread the gospel both in America and in foreign countries. "Can we then," stated the report, "be listless to the cause of missions? We cannot. **Methodism itself is a missionary system. Yield the missionary spirit, and you yield the very life-blood of the cause.**"

The action of the General Conference of 1820 had a great influence upon the missionary movement. The pioneer missionary society now had the support of the Church. It became popular after 1820 for local and conference missionary societies to be organized as auxiliary bodies to the parent missionary society. The cause of missions was presented annually at the conferences. Soon a disciplinary question, "What has been contributed for missions?" came into use. Missionary agents began to visit the circuits in order to acquaint the members of the spiritual destitution at home and abroad.

Finally in 1832 the Methodists were able to begin their foreign missionary work. Liberia, in Africa, was chosen as the field of the first foreign missionary endeavors of American Methodism. On November 6, 1832, Melville B. Cox sailed for Liberia. That date marks an epoch in the romance of American Methodism. Luccock says: "The sailing of the first missionary to a foreign land ever sent out by the Methodist Episcopal Church is so significant that it deserves a pause to grasp its large meaning."

Melville B. Cox, who will always have the enviable honor of being the first foreign ambassador of American Methodism, was born in Maine, but was a member of the Virginia Conference when he volunteered for the foreign field. Cox possessed the true missionary spirit. Cox was in poor health, yet he was so vitally interested in the evangelization of Africa that he felt that even his death might help promote Christianity in Africa. "I know I cannot live long in Africa," Cox said to a friend, "but I hope to live long enough to get there; and if God pleases that my bones shall lie in an African grave, I shall have established such a bond between Africa and the Church at home as shall not be broken till Africa be redeemed." Prior to his departure for Africa, Cox visited Wesleyan University. While there he said to one of the students, "If I die in Africa you must come over and write my epitaph."

"I will," replied the young man, "but what shall I write?"

"Write," said Cox, "Let a thousand fall before Africa be given up."

Cox reached Liberia on March 7, 1833. He had however hardly begun his work when he died on July 21,

1833. As Cox had predicted, his death proved to be an impetus to the missionary cause. Others took his place in Africa and that great continent became a part of the world parish of Methodism.

South America was the second mission field to be entered by the American Methodists. In 1836 Justin Spaulding sailed as a Methodist missionary to Brazil. In the same year John Dempster went to Argentina. Spaulding started a Methodist mission in Rio de Janeiro while Dempster began work at Buenos Aires. Reinforcements were later sent to both of these men.

The early agents of Methodism in South America suffered persecutions from the Roman Catholic priests. Unusual moves were made to block their labor. They received many threats of personal violence. In Rio de Janeiro a periodical, "O Catholico" was started with the purpose of destroying the influence of the missionaries. In Argentina the Methodists were not allowed to preach without a special license from the government, while in Brazil it was declared illegal for the Methodists to erect a church edifice.

Because of the opposition of state officials and persecutions by the priests the first missionaries to South America were unable to accomplish great results. Indirectly, however, they made some progress. The visits of Spaulding, Dempster, Kidder and other missionaries to interior parts of Brazil and Argentina furnished information for later missionaries. A great contribution was made by the distribution of portions of the Scripture and religious tracts. It was found that in Rio de Janeiro that not one in five hundred of the people had ever seen a Bible. Dempster was able to start a school in Buenos Aires. "My school," he wrote in January, 1840, "con-

sists of about eighty, of both sexes and of all ages—Creoles, English, Germans, French, Irish, and Scotch.” The missionaries were able to give spiritual help to the English speaking residents of Brazil and Argentina and to the sailors that came to the harbors.

Methodism made only meager numerical gains in South America during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1841 missionary work was temporarily suspended there. The Missionary Society in that year declared “that our labors in South America have been less productive of visible good than we had hoped.” The Methodists, however, did not completely abandon South America. Today it is a part of the world parish of which Wesley spoke.

Methodist missionaries also entered China. On September 6, 1847, Judson D. Collins and M. C. White, representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church reached Foochow. One year later, Charles Taylor and Benjamin Jenkins, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, arrived at Shanghai. These missionaries suffered many hardships, but after years of toil they were able to see some results of their labors. In 1851 Liew-sien-sang, a teacher, became the first Chinese convert of Southern Methodism, while in 1857, Ting Ang, a tradesman, was baptized as the first Chinese convert of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Forty-two years after Bishop Coke had died in his attempt to carry the Methodist message to India, William Butler, representing the Methodist Episcopal Church, reached that country. In the face of political strife and unsettled conditions Butler showed a great missionary spirit and laid the foundation for the future Methodist work in India.

American Methodist missionaries also went to European countries. On November 7, 1849, L. S. Jacoby arrived in Germany and began to organize Methodism there. In the same year O. P. Peterson went as a Methodist missionary to Norway. John P. Larsson was in 1854 recognized by the Missionary Society as the Methodist missionary to Sweden. In 1857 Methodist work began in Denmark. Wesley Prettyman and Albert L. Long went to Bulgaria in 1857 as representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In order to promote such a missionary program the Methodists needed a large amount of money. It is interesting to note how this was raised. An annual assessment of two dollars was made upon all members of the Missionary Society, but the sum realized from this source was very small. Another method was to take collections at the conference missionary anniversaries. The circuit riders on these occasions would give liberally of their small means. Anthony writes that "the poor preachers sometimes gave all the money they had under the inspiration of this excess of zeal." In order to encourage larger missionary gifts, some conferences printed in the missionary reports the names of all who contributed. Herrick states that in the North Indiana Conference "any person paying ten cents, even though he lived in a backwoods circuit, got his name printed in the minutes." The reports of the missionary rallies of early Methodism are interesting. At the Texas Conference of 1840 one brother arose and exclaimed, "Silver and gold have I none, yet the Lord has greatly blessed me, and I want to do something for his cause. Such as I have I give unto you. I will give a quarter of league of land, on the Brazos river, to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

The Methodist banner was raised prior to the Civil War in Africa, South America, China, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Bulgaria and India, but it was accomplished at a large cost and with great sacrifices. Melville B. Cox, was not the only missionary who gave up his life for the cause of foreign missions. Many missionaries buried their children on foreign soil. Professor Cannon has stated that during seventeen years of Methodist missionary work in Liberia "twenty-five white missionaries died in the field or returned in broken health."

Even though the victorious period of Methodist foreign missionary work did not come until after the Civil War, yet the first Methodist missionaries must not be forgotten, for they pioneered the way for those who later reaped the harvest. Those early American Methodists although handicapped by lack of resources longed to do great deeds on the foreign fields. When Bishop Andrew preached the ordination sermon on February 27, 1848, for Taylor and Jenkins, the first Southern Methodist missionaries to China, he made a statement that typified the attitude of the American Methodists toward foreign missionary work. Andrew expressed the regret that "instead of a forlorn hope of two missionaries to be sent from the Southern Methodist Church, it was not in his power to send a band of fifty faithful men to the benighted millions of the Flowery Kingdom."

## CHAPTER XII

### A NOBLE RECORD



WHEN the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 there were only about fifteen thousand Methodists in America, and on the surface there appeared to be no reason why the new Church should ever become prominent in American life. In fact the Methodist Episcopal Church came into existence almost unnoticed by the populace. By the year 1844, however, the Methodists had become the largest Protestant group in America. That marvelous growth is one of the outstanding religious phenomena of American history.

The following statistics arranged by Daniel Wise show that although the population of the United States increased rapidly during the first half of the nineteenth century, yet during that period the proportionate numerical gain of the Methodists was larger than that of the population:

The population increased from 1800 to 1810	36.45	per ct.
Methodism increased from.... 1801 to 1811	153.50	"
The population increased from 1810 to 1820	33.13	"
Methodism increased from.... 1811 to 1821	52.33	"
The population increased from 1820 to 1830	33.49	"
Methodism increased from.... 1821 to 1831	82.50	"
The population increased from 1830 to 1840	32.67	"
Methodism increased from.... 1831 to 1841	67.50	"
The population increased from 1840 to 1850	35.87	"
Methodism increased from.... 1841 to 1851	45.50	"

During the eighteenth century there were very few Methodists in America, but from 1801 to 1851 the Methodists became each year a larger part of the population. The following statistics illustrate that point:

In 1801 there was one Methodist to every 72½ of the whole population.

In 1811 there was one Methodist to every  $39\frac{1}{4}$  of the whole population.

In 1821 there was one Methodist to every 30 of the whole population.

In 1831 there was one Methodist to every 25 of the whole population.

In 1841 there was one Methodist to every  $19\frac{3}{4}$  of the whole population.

In 1851 there was one Methodist to every  $18\frac{1}{2}$  of the whole population.

The fifteen thousand charter members of the Methodist Episcopal Church proved to be a nucleus of a large denomination. Between 1800 and 1830 the Methodists increased from 64,894 to 476,153, a seven fold gain. At the close of the Civil War there were 1,921,897 Methodists in America. At that date one-third of the American Protestants were Methodists.

The growth of American Methodism is further shown by the large number of men who entered the Methodist ministry. In 1784 there were only eighty-three Methodist preachers in America, but by 1865 there were in all the branches of American Methodism 29,322 ministers, which was nearly six thousand more than the combined number of Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Protestant Episcopal clergymen.

What was the secret of the success of those pioneer Methodists? What did the Methodist Episcopal Church possess that caused it to surpass numerically the older denominations? Why did Methodism increase proportionately more rapidly than did the population? "When we consider," writes Goss, "that the ground had been preoccupied by other denominations from one hundred to one hundred and fifty years; when we take into account the feeling of intense denominationalism with which they had to contend; and when we look at their relative



strength at the close of the first century, we are compelled to admit that Methodism has in it elements of success unknown to other denominations."

People did not become Methodists because they hoped thereby to secure social, political, or economic advancement. On the contrary, it was unpopular to be a Methodist. The Methodist Episcopal Church was often called the "nigger church." On one occasion Bishop Asbury wrote that the "whites look upon us with contempt." When in 1802 Bishop Asbury found that at New Bern, North Carolina, "judges, counselors, doctors, and ministers" attended the Methodist meetings, he mentioned it in his journal as being very unusual. Very few of the early Methodists held political offices. Bishop Asbury said in 1804: "The Methodists have but two of their very numerous society members of Congress, and until these Democratic times we never had one. I question, if, in all the public legislatures in the seventeen United States, there are more than twenty members Methodists."

The Methodists also lacked many other things usually considered necessary for the growth of an institution. They had no newspaper publicity to aid them. Many editors did not consider the meeting of a Methodist annual conference worthy of recognition by their papers. Methodism did not gain membership by immigration for only a few English Methodists ever migrated to America. Culture and erudition did not produce a victorious Methodism for many of the pioneer Methodists were crude and unlettered. There was not a Methodist theological seminary in America until the Methodist membership had passed the million mark. It cannot be claimed that Methodism made its progress because it began during a religious awakening. Religion had reached a low level when

the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. The secret of the success of American Methodism must be sought elsewhere.

Methodism made progress in America because it was not hampered by traditions, by creedal tests, or by racial ties. It could work with all classes of people and with all nationalities. It was not like the Lutheran Church which appealed almost entirely to the German and Scandinavian people. The Congregationalists and the Presbyterians were limited in their work with the masses because of their Calvinistic views and their demand for a highly trained ministry. For a long time the Presbyterian Church consisted mainly of Scotch and Scotch-Irish people. The Protestant Episcopal Church was handicapped because of its English background and its ritualism. The common people felt that this church catered only to the aristocracy. Baptists were hurt by their semi-Calvinism, by their claim that immersion was the only mode of baptism, and by their congregational plan of government. In contrast with these older denominations the Methodist Episcopal Church was not bound by any thing that limited the area and scope of its work.

A democratic attitude aided the Methodists. There was no barrier between the Methodist preachers and the people. Bishop Marvin states that the Methodist ministers "were men of the people. They were fresh from the various callings of life and were in the fullest sympathy with the masses." The ignorant persons understood the simple message of the circuit riders. Bishop Foster spoke the truth when he said: "Those who have a weakness for aristocracy make poor Methodists. We are the people's church. We take stock in humanity. We believe in the

poor as well as the rich—the unlearned as well as the learned. We make the poor rich, and lift the unlearned out of their ignorance. We want our doors to be forever open to the people. This must be our glory and rejoicing.”

The early American Methodists were organized for a great spiritual conquest. They could march as an army. The bishops were the executive officials. Because of the Methodist itinerant plan, there was a preacher for every charge and circuit, and no minister was allowed to be idle. When people went to new sections of the country, the bishops would at once send circuit riders there to care for the spiritual needs of those frontiersmen. The presiding elders supervised and helped the young preachers and guided the Methodist program in a specified district. Annually at the conferences there was an examination of the work of each preacher and circuit. Each individual Methodist was required to live under strict spiritual discipline. The polity of Methodism was so efficient in the early period of the Church that Judge William Gaston, a Roman Catholic, once remarked: “Give me the Methodist Discipline and I can govern the world.”

The Methodists also had a sensible theology, for they were loyal to the religious views of John Wesley. They agreed with Wesley in his statement, “I believe the merciful God regards the lives of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness of the heart more than the clearness of the head.” People were not required to subscribe to creeds and dogmas before they could enter the Methodist Episcopal Church. Membership in a Methodist society was open to all those who desired to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins. After conversion the Methodists were not judged by their theo-

logical views but by their avoidance of evil, by their good deeds and by their attendance upon all the ordinances of God. The Methodists endeavored to spread Scriptural holiness rather than theology over America. Scriptural holiness to them meant the common fundamental principles of Christianity. Those early Methodists were richly rewarded for their sensible theological attitude. There was never a schism in American Methodism over doctrinal issues.

The freedom, the democracy, the polity, and the theology of the early American Methodists do not adequately explain, however, why the Wesleyan movement made such phenomenal progress in the New World. There is a more fundamental explanation, namely—the American Methodists put their dependence upon the Almighty God. Spiritual forces account for the success of American Methodism.

The two great Methodist leaders, John Wesley and Francis Asbury, were men who put their trust in God. In early life Wesley had endeavored to secure salvation by depending upon his own works and upon monastic practices. Wesley, however, made a failure of life until he came into contact with his Saviour and could declare: "I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken my sins, even mine, and had saved me from the law of sin and death." Francis Asbury never attended school beyond his thirteenth year, yet he became the great bishop of American Methodism. The secret of his great ministry is to be found in his close relationship to God. He laid the foundations of American Methodism because his only aim in life was "to live to God and to bring others so to do."

The circuit riders were brave men and were able to face physical hardships, but it was their spiritual qualities that influenced and affected the American people. The Methodist preachers bore the privations of the itinerancy because as they rode through the country there continually came to them these words, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," was the profound conviction of those men. They were impelled, says Grissom, "by an impulse supreme over love of home, ease, or comfort."

Not only did the early Methodist preachers put the cause of religion foremost in their lives but the majority of the laymen did likewise. Devout men and women begged for Methodist ministers to come to their neighborhood. Jesse Lee declared that the pioneer laymen "solicited us to come among them; and by their earnest and frequent petitions, both verbal and written, we were prevailed on, and encouraged to go among them; and they were ready to receive us with open hands and willing hearts, and to cry out, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' " There was a time, writes Rosser, "when the ordinary conversation of the Methodists was about the great things God was doing, and how they might help and encourage each other in the good way, and save perishing sinners around them, and their conversation was mingled with shouts, and prayers and praise." During that period of American Methodism when the large gains were made, the Methodist people shed tears over sermons, they labored to convert sinners, they publicly testified as to their religious experiences, they exhibited a spirit of self-denial, and they died with shouts of triumph on their lips.



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